

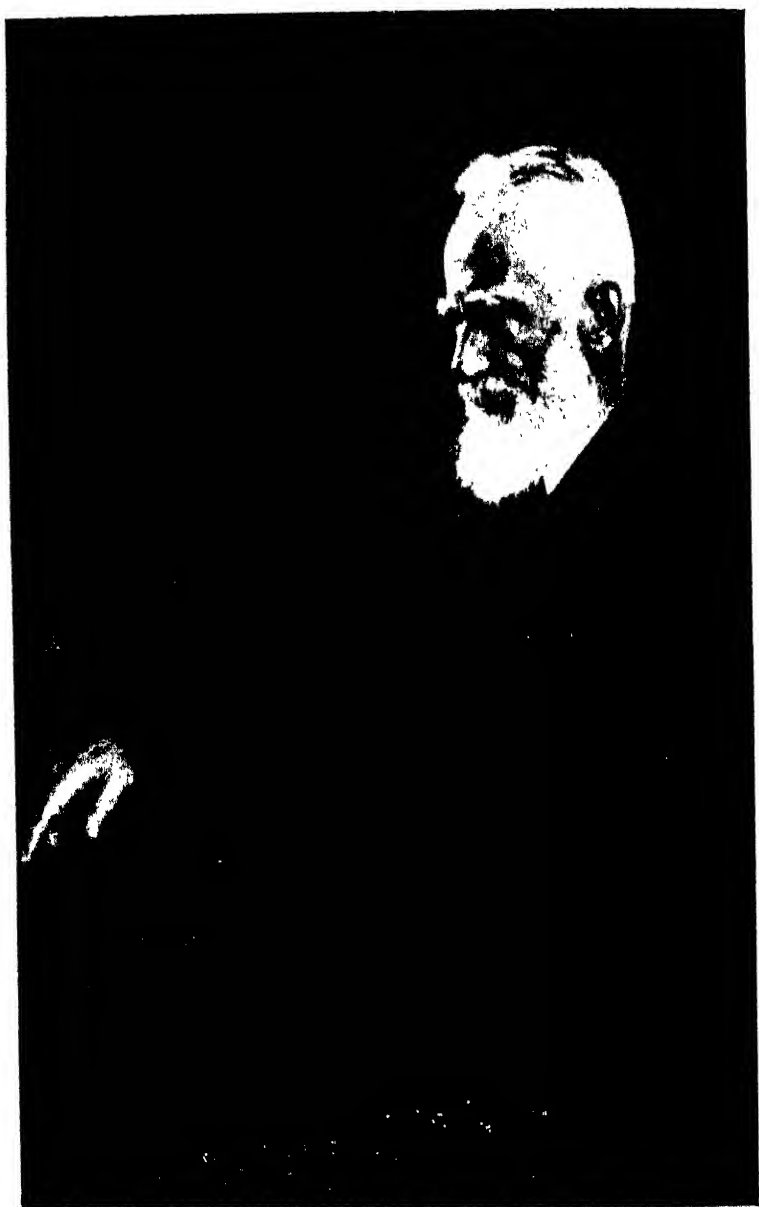
THE REAL BERNARD SHAW

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

UNEMPLOYMENT OR WAR (*Coward McCann, New York*)

AMERICA AND BRITAIN

CHARLES THE KING (*Play; Figurehead Press and Samuel French*)



George Bernard Shaw

THE
REAL BERNARD SHAW

BY
MAURICE COLBOURNE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON
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TO
BLANCHE PATCH
who served Bernard Shaw
even better than he knew

Mr Bernard Shaw is often asked to contribute prefaces to unpublished works. Sometimes the applicants add that a few words will be sufficient. This obliges him to call attention to the fact that his prefaces owe their value in the literary market to the established expectation of book purchasers that they will prove substantial and important works in themselves. The disappointment of this expectation in a single instance would destroy that value. A request for a preface by him is therefore a request for a gift of some months of hard professional work. When this is appreciated it will be seen that even with the best disposition towards his correspondents it is not possible for Mr. Shaw to oblige them in this particular manner.

Your first unsolicited shot at me was as good that I hardly like to demand you from a second; but I must warn you that there is a spite of Shaw books at present. Provoked by 90th birthday, and that only something very original will be worth adding to it.

L. B. S.

Your plan is excellent.

(4 Whitehall Court (130)
London, S.W.1.)

Agent Saint Lawrence, Welwyn, Herts

Mr Bernard Shaw is often asked to contribute prefaces to unpublished works. Sometimes the applicants add that a few words will be sufficient. This obliges him to call attention to the fact that his prefaces owe their value in the literary market to the established expectation of book purchasers that they will prove substantial and important works in themselves. The disappointment of this expectation in a single instance would destroy that value. A request for a preface by him is therefore a request for a gift of some months of hard professional work. When this is appreciated it will be seen that even with the best disposition towards his correspondents it is not possible for Mr. Shaw to oblige them in this particular manner.

Mr Maurice Colbourne is hereby authorized to quote the above in full in his forthcoming book.

L. Bernard Shaw

(4 Whitehall Court (130)
London, S.W.1.)

30/3/1948

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A SHAVIAN ANNARY

1850-1950

Each year's entries are not necessarily chronological. First come items of direct concern to Shaw, then those of less or no concern to him, with deaths and births (as a rule) at the end.

The word Shaw has been omitted to avoid its constant repetition.

KEY: *b.* (born); *d.* (dies); *p.* (produced); *pub.* (published).

Age

- 1850 His father's civil service post in Dublin abolished.
Lohengrin *p.*
North-west Passage discovered.
Robert Peel *d.* aged 62.
William Wordsworth *d.* aged 80.
Edward Bellamy *b.* *See* 1888.
- 1851 His father purchases membership of Dublin Corn Exchange.
Great Exhibition, Hyde Park.
Henry Arthur Jones *b.*
- 1852 Duke of Wellington *d.* aged 83.
- 1853 Russia mobilizes.
- 1854 Crimean War. Battles of Balaclava. Siege of Sebastopol.
Great Exhibition's Crystal Palace transferred to Sydenham Hill.
- 1855 Repeal of Stamp Duty on newspapers.
Arthur Wing Pinero *b.*
- 1856 Is born (26th July) at 33 Synge St., Dublin.
Queen Victoria, aged 36, in the twentieth year of her reign.
Treaty of Paris ends Crimean War.
Oscar Wilde *b.*
- 1 1857 Indian Mutiny.
British Museum Reading Room opened.
Auguste Comte *d.* aged 59.
Edward Elgar *b.*
- 2 1858 Property qualification for House of Commons membership abolished.
Jews admitted to Parliament.

Age

- Unsuccessful attempt to lay Atlantic cable. *See* 1866.
 Restored Covent Garden Opera House reopens.
 Eugène Brieux *b.*
- 3 1859 Darwin's *Origin of Species* pub.
 Victoria Falls discovered.
 Thomas Babington Macaulay *d.* aged 59.
 Henri Bergson *b.*
 Eleanora Duse *b.*
 Sydney Olivier *b.*
 Sidney Webb *b.*
- 4 1860 Tolstoy's *War and Peace* pub.
 Arthur Schopenhauer *d.* aged 72.
 James M. Barrie *b.*
 Anton Chekhov *b.*
 W. R. Inge *b.*
- 5 1861 American Civil War.
 Albert, Prince Consort, *d.* aged 42.
- 6 1862 Cotton famine in Lancashire.
 J. T. Grein *b.*
- 7 1863 Edward, Prince of Wales, marries Alexandra of Denmark.
 Constantin Stanislavsky *b.*
- 8 1864 The (First) International formed. *See* 1889, 1919.
 Giacomo Meyerbeer *d.* aged 73.
- 9 1865 *Tristan and Isolde* p.
 Lord Palmerston *d.* aged 81.
 Richard Cobden *d.* aged 61.
 Stella Tanner (later Mrs. Patrick Campbell) *b.*
- 10 1866 Fenian conspiracy in Ireland. Habeas Corpus Act suspended.
 Ibsen's *Brand* pub.
 First Atlantic cable laid.
 H. G. Wells *b.*
- 11 1867 Attends the first of his four Dublin schools, the Wesleyan Connexional.
 Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* pub.
 Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* pub.
 Second Reform Act.
 Dynamite patented by Alfred Nobel. *See* 1901.
 Canada created a Dominion.
 Albert Hall completed.
 Michael Faraday *d.* aged 76.

Age

- John Galsworthy *b.*
Luigi Pirandello *b.*
- 12 1868 The family moves to Vandeleur Lee's house, 1 Hatch St., Dublin.
First Gladstone Liberal Ministry.
- 13 1869 Irish Church disestablished.
Suez Canal opened.
- 14 1870 First Irish Land Act.
Elementary Education Act.
First appearance in London of Henry Irving (in *Two Roses* at Vaudeville Theatre).
Charles Dickens *d.* aged 58.
Vladimir Lenin *b.*
- 15 1871 Employed by Charles Uniacke Townshend, Dublin estate agent. *See* 1876.
Darwin's *Descent of Man* pub.
Jevons's *Theory of Political Economy* pub.
Religious tests at English universities abolished.
Army Purchase System abolished.
Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Lord Lytton, *d.* aged 69.
John Millington Synge *b.*
- 16 1872 His mother and two sisters leave Dublin for London, preceded by Vandeleur Lee.
Moves to rooms with his father at 61 Harcourt St., Dublin.
Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* pub.
Ballot Act.
Max Beerbohm *b.*
- 17 1873 David Livingstone *d.* aged 56.
- 18 1874 Public Worship Act.
Endowed Schools Act.
Disraeli returned to power.
Winston S. Churchill *b.*
W. Somerset Maugham *b.*
- 19 1875 His first contribution to the press. Subject: Moody and Sankey, revivalists.
First London appearance of Charles Wyndham at Criterion Theatre.
Georges Bizet *d.* aged 36.
- 20 1876 Leaves Townshend's estate agency and Dublin for London, where he joins his mother at 13 Victoria (now Netherton) Grove, Fulham Road.
The Ring of the Nibelungs p.

Age

- Queen Victoria proclaimed Empress of India.
Albert Memorial completed.
- 21 1877 Thomas Edison telephone patented. *See* 1879.
Comes of age.
Samuel Butler's *Life and Habit* pub.
First Gilbert and Sullivan opera p. (*The Sorcerer*, at Opera Comique, Strand).
Walter Bagehot *d.* aged 51
- 22 1878 Harley Granville-Barker *b.*
- 23 1879 Employed by Edison Telephone Company, Queen Victoria St., for a few months, thereby meeting Americans.
Makes his first speech (at Zetetical Society in Great Queen St., Long Acre).
Joins Zetetical Society, meeting Sidney Webb.
Writes first novel, *Immaturity*.
Samuel Butler's *Evolution Old and New* pub.
Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* pub.
Albert Einstein *b.*
Joseph Stalin *b.*
- 24 1880 Writes second novel, *The Irrational Knot*.
Samuel Butler's *Unconscious Memory* pub.
Charles Bradlaugh, atheist M.P., debarred from taking oath in House of Commons. *See* 1886.
Land League agitation in Ireland.
'George Eliot' *d.* aged 61.
- 25 1881 Writes third novel, *Love among the Artists*.
Contracts smallpox. Does not shave. Hence the beard.
Turns vegetarian after reading Shelley.
H. M. Hyndman's *England for All* pub.
H. M. Hyndman founds London Democratic Federation. *See* 1884.
Ibsen's *Ghosts* pub.
Second Irish Land Act.
Benjamin Disraeli, Lord Beaconsfield, *d.* aged 76.
Thomas Carlyle *d.* aged 86
Kemal Atatürk *b.*
Savoy Theatre built.
- 26 1882 Writes fourth novel, *Cashel Byron's Profession*.
Is converted to Socialism on hearing Henry George speak at Memorial Hall, Farringdon St., and becomes aware of the importance of economics.
Parsifal p.



The beard begins: Bernard Shaw in his early twenties

Age

- Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* pub.
 Egyptian War.
 Charles Darwin *d.* aged 73.
 William Stanley Jevons *d.* aged 47.
- 27 1883 Writes fifth and last novel (incomplete), *An Unsocial Socialist*.
 Nietzsche's *Thus spake Zarathustra* pub.
 Anti-Vivisection Bill rejected.
 Karl Marx *d.* aged 65.
 Ivan Turgenev *d.* aged 65.
 Richard Wagner *d.* aged 69.
- 28 1884 Fabian Society founded.
 Joins Fabian Society.
 William Morris forms the Socialist League.
 London Democratic Federation renamed Social Democratic Federation.
 Representation of the People Act.
- 29 1885 Moves with his mother to 29 Fitzroy Square. *See* 1889.
 Begins and then abandons *Widowers' Houses*.
 Reviews books for *Pall Mall Gazette* until 1888.
 His father dies. Weekly allowance from Dublin (£1) stops.
 Journalism brings him £117 os. 3d. *Cf.* 1895.
 Joins Fabian Society's Executive Committee.
 One of his speeches converts Annie Besant to Socialism.
 Mrs. Jennie Patterson breaks his virginity.
 First Salisbury Conservative Ministry.
 Redistribution of Seats Act.
 General Gordon killed at Khartoum.
- 30 1886 Victor Hugo *d.* aged 83.
 Writes Fabian articles for Annie Besant's *Our Corner*.
 Art critic to *The World* until 1889.
 Samuel Butler's *Luck or Cunning?* pub.
 Charles Bradlaugh at last permitted to sit in House of Commons. *See* 1880.
 Income tax 3d. in the £.
- 31 1887 Participates in Bloody Sunday (13th November) and decides that discretion is the better part of valour.
 Edits *Fabian Essays*, and contributes two.
 Celluloid film invented.
 Herbert Beerbohm Tree becomes actor-manager (Comedy Theatre).
 Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee.

- Age*
- 32 1888 Music critic for *The Star* until 1890 under name of Corno di Bassetto.
Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward, 2000 to 1887* pub.
Local Government Act.
Eugène Labiche *d.* aged 72.
Eugene O'Neill *b.*
- 33 1889 Moves with his mother to 36 Osnaburgh St., near Portland Road station.
Fabian Essays pub.
First production of an Ibsen play (*A Doll's House*) in England.
The Second (Socialist) International founded. *See* 1864.
Irish Literary Theatre founded.
London docks strike.
- 34 1890 Music critic for *The World* until 1894.
Heligoland ceded to Germany.
- 35 1891 Actively supports Education Act.
Writes *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*.
J. T. Grein's Independent Theatre Society presents first English performance of Ibsen's *Ghosts*.
George Alexander begins actor-management of St. James's Theatre.
William Morris starts Kelmscott Press.
William Morris's *News from Nowhere* pub.
Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* pub.
Charles Bradlaugh *d.* aged 58.
Barry Sullivan *d.* aged 69.
Sidney Howard *b.*
- 36 1892 Finishes his first play, *Widowers' Houses*.
Widowers' Houses p.
Begins corresponding with Ellen Terry.
Sidney Webb marries Beatrice Potter.
Ibsen's *The Master Builder* pub.
Irish Home Rule Bill introduced by Gladstone.
J. M. Barrie's first play, *Walker, London*, p.
- 37 1893 Writes *The Philanderer*.
Writes *Mrs. Warren's Profession*.
First London appearance of Eleanora Duse.
Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* p.
House of Lords rejects Irish Home Rule Bill.
Gaelic League founded.

Age

- Thirteen weeks' coal strike.
 Duke of York, later King George V, marries Princess Mary of Teck.
- 38 1894 Resigns as music critic from *The World* on death of its editor, Edmund Yates.
 Writes *Arms and the Man*.
 Writes *Candida*.
Arms and the Man p.
 First American production of any of his plays (*Arms and the Man*).
 Gladstone resigns.
 Parish Councils Act.
- 39 1895 Dramatic critic for Frank Harris's *Saturday Review* until 1898.
 Writes *The Man of Destiny*.
 Writes *You Never Can Tell*.
 Writes *The Sanity of Art*.
 Journalism brings him some £500. Cf. 1885.
Candida p.
 First meets H. G. Wells.
 Learns to cycle—with the Webbs at Beachy Head.
 Woman burned as a witch at Cloneen, Co. Tipperary, Ireland.
 London School of Economics founded.
 Henry Irving knighted.
 Oscar Wilde tried and sentenced. See 1897.
- 40 1896 Writes *The Devil's Disciple*.
 Meets Charlotte Payne-Townshend, later Mrs. Shaw.
 Miss Payne-Townshend joins Fabian Society.
 Cyril Maude becomes joint manager with Frederick Harrison of Theatre Royal, Haymarket.
 Last London appearance of Ada Rehan.
 Industrial Conciliation Act.
 William Morris *d.* aged 62.
 Alfred Nobel *d.* aged 63.
 Robert E. Sherwood *b.*
- 41 1897 Becomes vestryman of St. Pancras. See 1903.
You Never Can Tell withdrawn from rehearsal at Theatre Royal, Haymarket.
The Man of Destiny p.
The Devil's Disciple p.
 Edward Bellamy's *Equality* pub.
 William Terriss mortally stabbed.

Age

- Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.
 Voluntary School Act.
 Necessitous School Board Act.
 Herbert Beerbohm Tree opens Her Majesty's Theatre.
 Afridi Revolt suppressed.
 Oscar Wilde completes prison sentence and goes to France.
- 42 1898 Henry George *d.* aged 58.
 Recovers from illnesses and accidents.
 Resigns from *Saturday Review* as dramatic critic and is succeeded by Max Beerbohm.
 Marries Charlotte Payne-Townshend.
 Writes *Caesar and Cleopatra*.
Mrs. Warren's Profession p.
Plays, Pleasant and Unpleasant pub.
The Perfect Wagnerite pub.
 Edward Bellamy *d.* aged 48.
- 43 1899 Writes *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*.
You Never Can Tell p.
 Boer War begins.
 Stage Society founded.
 Irish Literary Theatre founded.
 Anglo-Egyptian Condominium in Sudan proclaimed.
 Anti-Sweating League formed.
- 44 1900 Moves to his wife's flat at 10 Adelphi Terrace, later built over with the Embankment's Shell - Mex building. *See* 1928.
Captain Brassbound's Conversion p.
 Ellen Terry first sees, but does not meet, him.
 Becomes borough councillor on St. Pancras becoming a borough.
 Australia created a Commonwealth.
 Friedrich Nietzsche *d.* aged 56.
 Sir Arthur Sullivan *d.* aged 59.
 Oscar Wilde *d.* aged 44.
 Siegfried Trebitsch *b.*
- 45 1901 Writes *The Admirable Bashville*.
 Begins *Man and Superman*.
Caesar and Cleopatra p.
 Nobel Peace Prize first awarded. *See* 1867.
 Death of Queen Victoria, aged 81.
- 46 1902 Continues *Man and Superman*.
 Boer War ends.

Age

- New World and Old linked by wireless telegraphy.
 Anglo-Japanese Treaty.
 Order of Merit instituted.
 Education Act.
 Edward Elgar knighted.
 Charles Wyndham knighted.
 Samuel Butler *d.* aged 67.
- 47 1903 Resigns from St. Pancras Borough Council.
 Finishes *Man and Superman*.
The Admirable Bashville p.
 H. G. Wells joins Fabian Society.
 Sir Charles Wyndham opens New Theatre.
 Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* pub.
 Emile Zola *d.* aged 62.
- 48 1904 Writes *The Commonsense of Municipal Trading*.
 Writes *John Bull's Other Island*.
 Writes *How He lied to Her Husband*.
 Defeated as Progressive candidate for L.C.C.
 Moves to The Old House, Harmer Green, Welwyn,
 Herts.
 Vedrenne-Barker management at Royal Court Theatre
 begins.
John Bull's Other Island p.
How He lied to Her Husband p.
 Academy of Dramatic Art founded by Herbert Beer-
 bohm Tree.
 Dublin's Abbey Theatre opens.
 Anton Chekhov *d.* aged 44.
- 49 1905 Revisits Ireland after 29 years' absence.
 Writes *Major Barbara*.
 Writes *Passion, Poison, and Petrification*.
 Buys house at Ayot St. Lawrence, Herts, and moves in.
Man and Superman p.
Major Barbara p.
The Philanderer p.
Passion, Poison, and Petrification p.
 King Edward VII attends Command Performance of
John Bull's Other Island at Royal Court Theatre.
 Avenue Theatre partly demolished by collapse of
 Charing Cross Station's roof. See 1907.
 Sir Henry Irving *d.* aged 67.
- 50 1906 Writes *The Doctor's Dilemma*.
 Goes to France to sit to Rodin. See 1945.

Age

- You Never Can Tell* p.
The Doctor's Dilemma p.
Our Theatres in the Nineties pub.
 Ellen Terry's first appearance in her only Shaw play,
Captain Brassbound's Conversion.
 Meets Ellen Terry.
 Liberal party sweeps into power.
 Henrik Ibsen *d.* aged 78.
- 51 1907 Writes *Interlude at the Playhouse*.
 Cyril Maude opens Playhouse, formerly Avenue
 Theatre. See 1905.
Interlude at the Playhouse p.
Man and Superman's Hell Scene p.
 J. E. Vedrenne opens Queen's Theatre.
 Richard Mansfield *d.* aged 50.
- 52 1908 Writes *Getting Married*.
 Revises and republishes *The Sanity of Art*.
Getting Married p.
 Victorien Sardou *d.* aged 77.
- 53 1909 Writes *The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet*.
 Writes *The Fascinating Foundling*.
 Writes *Press Cuttings*.
 Writes *A Glimpse of Reality*.
 Writes *Misalliance*.
The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet p.
Press Cuttings p.
 Kenneth Barnes appointed administrator of Academy
 of Dramatic Art.
 Trade Board Act.
 North Pole discovered.
 Arthur Wing Pinero knighted.
- 54 1910 John Millington Synge *d.* aged 37.
 Writes *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*.
Misalliance p.
The Dark Lady of the Sonnets p.
 Gertrude Kingston opens Little Theatre, John St.,
 W.C.
 Death of King Edward VII, aged 68.
 Count Leo Tolstoy *d.* aged 82.
 Mark Twain *d.* aged 75.
- 55 1911 Writes *Fanny's First Play*.
Fanny's First Play p.
 Resigns from Fabian Society's Executive Committee.

Age

- Elected to Council of Academy of Dramatic Art *vice*
 Sir W. S. Gilbert, retired.
 International copyright laws amended.
 Dr. W. R. Inge appointed Dean of St. Paul's.
 Order of Merit conferred on Sir Edward Elgar.
 George Alexander knighted.
 Sir W. S. Gilbert *d.* aged 74.
- 56 1912 Writes *Androcles and the Lion*.
 Writes *Overruled*.
 Writes *Pygmalion*.
Androcles and the Lion p.
Overruled p.
 Coal Mines (Minimum Wages) Act.
 General William Booth, founder of Salvation Army,
d. aged 83.
 August Strindberg *d.* aged 63.
- 57 1913 His mother dies, aged 83.
 Writes *Great Catherine*.
 Writes *The Music Cure*.
 Enlarges and republishes *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*.
 Begins *Heartbreak House*.
Pygmalion p.
Great Catherine p.
 Helps the Webbs financially to found *The New States-*
man.
 Baronetcy conferred on J. M. Barrie.
- 58 1914 First World War begins.
 Writes *Commonsense about the War*.
The Music Cure p.
 Panama Canal opened.
- 59 1915 Tommaso Salvini *d.* aged 86.
- 60 1916 Writes *O'Flaherty, V.C.*
 Writes *The Inca of Perusalem*.
 Writes *Augustus does His Bit*.
The Inca of Perusalem p.
 Ada Rehan *d.* aged 55.
- 61 1917 Writes *Annajanska, the Bolshevik Empress*.
 Tours the Western Front at Field Marshal Haig's
 invitation.
 Russian Revolutions. (1) Democratic (Kerensky) in
 February, and (2) Communist (Lenin) in October.
O'Flaherty, V.C. p.
Augustus does His Bit p.

Age

- Sir Herbert Tree *d.* aged 63.
 Auguste Rodin *d.* aged 77.
- 62 1918 First World War ends.
 Women aged 30 enfranchised in Great Britain. *See*
 1928.
 Begins *Back to Methuselah*.
 Trade Board Act.
- 63 1919 Sir George Alexander *d.* aged 59.
 Finishes *Heartbreak House*.
 Continues *Back to Methuselah*.
 The Third (Communist) International formed. *See*
 1864.
 Lawrence Langner founds New York Theatre Guild.
 Dean Inge's *Outspoken Essays* pub.
 Industrial Courts Act.
- 64 1920 Sir Charles Wyndham *d.* aged 81.
 Blanche Patch becomes his secretary.
 Attends, alone, death-bed of his sister, Lucy.
 Finishes *Back to Methuselah*.
Heartbreak House p.
 Joan of Arc canonized.
 Academy of Dramatic Art incorporated by Royal
 Charter.
 League of Nations meets.
 Employment of Women, Young Persons, and Children
 Act.
- 65 1921 British Communist Party formed.
 Irish Free State formed.
- 66 1922 H. M. Hyndman *d.* aged 79.
 Writes *The Art of Rehearsal*.
 Translates Siegfried Trebitsch's *Frau Gittas Sühne*.
Back to Methuselah p.
 Order of Merit conferred on Sir James Barrie.
- 67 1923 Writes *Saint Joan*.
Saint Joan p.
 Duke of York, later King George VI, marries Lady
 Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon.
 W. B. Yeats awarded Nobel Prize for Literature.
- 68 1924 Sarah Bernhardt *d.* aged 78.
 First broadcast of a Shaw play (*O'Flaherty, V.C.*).
 Censor's ban on *Mrs. Warren's Profession* lifted.
 The Guild Theatre, New York, opens.
 First Labour Government.

Age

- Barony conferred on Sydney Olivier on his becoming Secretary of State for India.
 Petrograd renamed Leningrad.
 William Archer *d.* aged 68.
 Eleanor Duse *d.* aged 64.
 Anatole France *d.* aged 80.
 Vladimir Lenin *d.* aged 54.
- 69 1925 Awarded Nobel Prize for Literature.
 Ellen Terry awarded Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire.
 Barry Jackson knighted.
- 70 1926 General Strike.
- 71 1927 Joins B.B.C.'s Advisory Committee on Spoken English.
A Glimpse of Reality p.
 Henri Bergson awarded Nobel Prize for Literature.
- 72 1928 Adelphi Terrace about to be demolished (*see* 1900), moves his London flat to 4 Whitehall Court, S.W.
The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism pub.
 Meets Rudyard Kipling for first time, as fellow pall-bearer at Thomas Hardy's funeral at Westminster Abbey.
 Women aged 21 enfranchised in Great Britain. *See* 1918.
 Dublin Gate Theatre founded.
 Dame Ellen Terry *d.* aged 80.
- 73 1929 Writes *The Apple Cart*.
 First Malvern Festival.
 Writes *The King and the Doctors*.
 Second Labour Government.
 Sidney Webb appointed Colonial Secretary. *See* 1931.
 Order of Merit conferred on John Galsworthy.
- 74 1930 First of his plays to be filmed: *How He lied to Her Husband*.
Immaturity, his first novel, pub. *See* 1879.
 Proposes Einstein's health in eulogy at Savoy Hotel banquet in London.
 Acting recognized legally as a fine art.
- 75 1931 Writes *Too True to be Good*.
 Visits U.S.S.R. with Marquess of Lothian, Viscount and Lady Astor and their son, and meets Stalin.
Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw: a Correspondence pub.
His Complete Plays pub.

Age

- Sidney Webb resigns. *See* 1929.
- 76 1932 Visits South Africa.
Writes *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God*.
Too True to be Good p.
Starts round-the-world cruise in S.S. *Empress of Britain*.
Eugène Brieux *d.* aged 74.
Lady Gregory *d.* aged 80.
- 77 1933 Visits America, inspecting Hollywood and going ashore at New York.
Writes *On the Rocks*.
Writes *Village Wooing*.
Writes *The Political Madhouse in the United States and Nearer Home*.
On the Rocks p.
John Galsworthy *d.* aged 65.
Annie Besant *d.* aged 86.
- 78 1934 His *Collected Prefaces* pub.
Visits New Zealand.
Writes *The Six of Calais*.
Writes *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*.
Village Wooing p.
The Six of Calais p.
Cedric Hardwicke knighted.
Dean Inge retires from St. Paul's.
Sir Edward Elgar *d.* aged 77.
Sir Arthur Pinero *d.* aged 79.
- 79 1935 Writes *The Millionairess*.
Meets Gabriel Pascal. Their association in films begins.
The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles p.
J. T. Grein *d.* aged 72.
- 80 1936 Death of King George V.
Abdication of King Edward VIII.
Writes *The King, the Constitution, and the Lady*.
The Millionairess p.
Eire passes External Relations Act. *See* 1948.
Crystal Palace burnt down. *See* 1851, 1854.
Luigi Pirandello *d.* aged 69.
- 81 1937 Refinishes Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*.
Sir Barry Jackson relinquishes management of Malvern Festivals, Roy Limbert succeeding him.
Cymbeline Refinished p.

Age

- 82 1938 Sir James Barrie *d.* aged 77.
Suffers and recovers from pernicious anaemia.
Writes *Geneva*.
Hitler signs worthless pact with Neville Chamberlain at Munich.
Kenneth Barnes knighted.
Constantin Stanislavsky *d.* aged 75.
Kemal Atatürk *d.* aged 57.
- 83 1939 Writes *In Good King Charles's Golden Days*.
Second World War begins.
Writes *Uncommonsense about the War*. See 1914.
In Good King Charles's Golden Days p.
Criminal Justice Act.
Max Beerbohm knighted.
Sidney Howard *d.* aged 48.
William Butler Yeats *d.* aged 73.
- 84 1940 Malvern Festival suspended.
Major Barbara filmed.
Winston Churchill becomes Prime Minister.
Mrs. Patrick Campbell *d.* aged 75.
- 85 1941 Writes *The R.A.D.A. Graduate's Keepsake and Counsellor*.
German bomb destroys Little Theatre. See 1910.
Henri Bergson *d.* aged 82.
- 86 1942 Retires from Council of Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.
United Nations Organization formed.
- 87 1943 Writes *Everybody's Political What's What*.
Death of his wife, Charlotte, aged 86.
Sydney, Lord Olivier, *d.* aged 84.
'Shaw's Corner'—his house at Ayot St. Lawrence—given to the National Trust.
- 88 1944 Hitler's Europe invaded.
- 89 1945 Second World War ends.
Presents Rodin's bronze to Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. See 1906.
Third Labour Government.
Film of *Caesar and Cleopatra* released.
Atomic Age begins.
- 90 1946 Broadcasts on his ninetieth birthday.
Begins *Buoyant Billions*.
Made a Freeman of the borough of St. Pancras.
Made a Freeman of the city of Dublin.

Age

- London Exhibition of Shaviana by National Book League.
- Oxford University Press choose *Back to Methusaleh* for No. 500 in World's Classics series.
- Harley Granville-Barker *d.* aged 68.
- Charles Macdona *d.* aged 86.
- H. G. Wells *d.* aged 80.
- 91 1947 Finishes *Buoyant Billions*.
 Elected to Praesidium of the Prague Congress of the Union of Authors, Actors, and Journalists.
 Shaw radio festival staged by B.B.C.'s Third Programme.
The Doctor's Dilemma accounted the year's most popular broadcast on B.B.C.'s Third Programme.
 India and Pakistan created Dominions.
 Burma secedes from British Empire.
 Marriage of Princess Elizabeth to Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.
 Sidney Webb *d.* aged 88.
 W. G. Fay *d.* aged 75.
- 92 1948 Revises *Buoyant Billions*.
Buoyant Billions p.
 Begins another play.
 Lords reject Commons' Bill to abolish capital punishment.
- 1949 Eire repeals External Relations Act. See 1936.
- 1950

CHAPTER I

THIS BOOK

WERE book-titles chosen solely to distinguish one book from another and not, as I take the main purpose to be, to suggest accurately and crisply the nature or contents of a book, then this volume should certainly bear another title, because it differs very considerably indeed from *The Real Bernard Shaw* published in 1939 from the same pen. Among the additions to be found in the present book are a Shavian annary, a chart of the Shavian drama, a descriptive catalogue of the plays, more illustrations, and a reinforcement of the text with some seventy thousand words. Indeed, feeling that a new title was warranted, I made some effort to find one, but without success. The old title is therefore impressed for further service, for it seemed unnecessary and stupid to drop a good title save for a better one.

In design, too, the book is conspicuously changed and its emphasis shifted. Previously, I was anxious to do justice to Shaw's activities outside the theatre and to his gifts other than playwrighting; so much so, that I relegated consideration of his plays to the outhouse of an Appendix. Believing the preacher, philosopher, and economist to be the most important of Shaw's several selves, I brought them to the centre of the stage, floodlit them as best I could; and left his playwrighting self unlit in the wings. Now that self, too, takes the centre of the stage.

Not that I have changed my mind about his various selves. I still do not believe that Shaw either by temperament or inclination is first a playwright, even though he be first playwright of his time. He wrote plays, I believe, for the same reason that Forbes-Robertson acted—because of a remarkable talent that would not be denied. He wrote plays, not because he wanted to, but because he couldn't help it. Forbes-Robertson, fastidious and religious, was far from at ease in the hurly-burly of the theatre; he would have preferred to paint: yet he acted. He couldn't help it.

Similarly Shaw was always really more interested in his array of hobbies—his economic studies and political free-lancing, his tub-thumping and borough counselling, his Creative Evolution, his spelling reforms and so forth—than in the playwrighting devil that fortunately possessed him. At any rate he would agree wholeheartedly that a man interested chiefly in playwrighting would write very uninteresting plays. A man should have something to say before exercising the writer's craft of saying it, and Shaw, interested in life rather than the theatre, had something to say.

It is interesting to note how Shaw, as he became older, unconsciously tried to dissociate his real self from his playwrighting self. Almost apologizing for being a dramatist, he maintained he was nothing but a medium for his plays, which were written through him rather than by him and were essentially beyond his ken and control, accomplishments inexplicable. In his experience a play, he says, 'writes itself': his job is merely to set down on paper as clearly and perfectly as he can whatever his 'control'—to use a spiritualist term—dictates. Such a conviction, true or false, certainly opens the way to an infallible method of deflecting adverse criticism, thus neatly enabling Shaw to 'pass the buck.'

What, then, is Shaw first and foremost? I would say, an amateur thinker. He revels in cerebration for its own sake, no matter whither it may lead. There is your true amateur, your true lover: the man who does something not for gain and not for fame, but simply for love of doing it. Shaw enjoys trudging along the labyrinths of intellectual speculation. Delightedly he shoulders the burden of thought. The effort, the exercise, the agony exhilarate him.

Sometimes the exhilaration goes to his head. What is *Misalliance's* preface *On Children*, for instance, but a gigantic circle described by the reeling of a man drunk with cerebration? Fondly fancying himself striding straight ahead, he lands up hard by his starting point, breathless, exhausted, and immensely pleased. Such cerebral orgies are characteristically Shavian.

He even goes so far as to suggest hopefully that Man

will eventually develop a capacity for intellectual ecstasy before which all acts of physical ecstasy will pale as the moon pales before the sun. Flashes of such ecstasy, he believes, must have struck the greatest thinkers at the moments of their greatest inspiration: Newton as he grasped the law of gravity, and Archimedes as he jumped out of his bath crying 'Eureka!' Shaw himself claims experience to justify his belief that this ecstasy is both real and attainable, and that Man should will his way towards it until he is freed from the bondage of the troublesome flesh.

Thus our first glimpse of Shaw is not of a playwright, but of an ardent votary of cerebration on his knees in the Temple of Intellect before its immanent deity, the Will. It is an appropriate glimpse, for almost the whole of the serious side of the real Bernard Shaw can be summed up, as he has often summed up his religious philosophy, in the old adage, Where there's a will there's a way.

A point may be pressed too far. To condemn to an Appendix the plays of a dramatist, peerless at any rate in the first half of the twentieth century, is to press it so far as to blunt it. Accordingly, I have devoted three new chapters to the Shavian drama, play by play.

These are accompanied by a comprehensive chart of the plays. Its object is to offer at a glance the salient facts of the plays' first presentations on the world's stages. How great the need was for such a factual document probably only its compiler can fully appreciate. It was something of a shock to find that the meticulous Shaw had kept no such records of his works. As an indication of the difficulties of collecting the data from two hemispheres and assembling them, I may point out that one of the foremost Anglo-American professional research bureaus, having blithely undertaken the task, had to confess itself defeated after three months' unavailing effort. As it is, my debt for services rendered, a debt now gratefully recorded, is due chiefly to Mrs. Gabrielle Enthoven, O.B.E., of the Victoria and Albert Museum; Miss Blanche Patch, Bernard Shaw's secretary; Mr. George Freedley, curator of the New York Public Library's Theatre Collection; and Mr. Paul

Myers, of that Collection's staff. The efforts of these helpers have produced a compilation which may be of some value as a complete yet handy sheet of reference. At least it will serve to settle arguments over dates and the names of theatres.

Though these and other changes may be held to warrant a fresh title upon republication after a lapse of nine years, yet, truth to tell, I find myself reluctant to abandon the old title or to take final leave of the old book, much of which I, at least, cannot improve on. Moreover, we have been companions, *The Real Bernard Shaw* and I, for just on twenty years. I have watched it grow from a series of scattered notes for my first frightened lectures across Canada in 1928. Luckily I kept my fright to myself, with the gratifying result that the New York Theatre Guild commissioned me to repeat the lecture (among others) across the U.S.A. the following year. By then my notes, though more orderly, were so bulky as to compel me to regiment them into a manuscript. It was this document that the Canadian branch of my present publishers pounced upon with commendable promptness and issued as a little volume in emerald green. Cabling a demand to see the proofs, Shaw corrected them so entertainingly and profusely that a brief battle royal ensued for their possession, I not surrendering until convinced that I had no legal claim to this heavily scored piece of Shaviana.

In this, the first edition of *The Real Bernard Shaw*, I had asserted with the omniscience of youth that Shaw would never visit America, on the ground that distance would continue to lend enchantment to the view. Shaw, I knew, was clever enough showman to realize that the farther off he remained the larger, more godlike and mythical would he loom in American eyes. He must stay on the stage, so to speak, not descend into the audience. I had overlooked, however, Mrs. Shaw's passion for travel that trailed her unresisting husband in its wake; and before 1932 was out Shaw was bundled off round the world, irrevocably bound, short of his seizing the wheel of the S.S. *Empress of Britain* and altering course, for America. In this manner did Shaw 'visit America.' It would have been better for his

American reputation had he seized that wheel, for his appearance in person in the land he had insulted so gaily and consistently appreciably damaged his vogue there as a star turn and privileged bogey.

The facts of the visit are somewhat pathetic. Lying off San Francisco, Shaw merely annoyed the West Coast by refusing to budge from the ship except to visit Hollywood, America's least American city. San Francisco, her loveliest, he avoided. On reaching the Eastern seaboard a week or two later, he went ashore at New York only to test the Guild Theatre's acoustics with his own voice, and to deliver a public speech elsewhere in New York the same evening. The speech unfortunately misfired. Shaw paid Americans the compliment of treating seriously both his subject (Civics) and his audience, and wished to be treated seriously himself. They, on the contrary, were chiefly out for entertainment by The Funny Man. It was a near thing. Not far removed from a fiasco, the evening was one more bead to be threaded on the long rosary of misunderstanding round our clown's neck.

Failure or not, Shaw's American visit belied my book. To annotate the book, therefore, I wrote a further chapter entitled 'Bernard Shaw and America,' and with this and other additions it was again published, this time in Boston.

The book at that time was no more than the slimmest of essays. It was only when Shaw, far from showing signs of dying, decaying, or in any way piping down, kept churning out more and more material, and had come to be lit annually in the aura of the Malvern Festivals and been enshrined as their patron saint, that I finally, in 1939, turned what had been a sketch into a fairly full-length portrait. It was annoying that Adolf Hitler chose precisely the same moment to turn Europe into a shambles. But the book was published notwithstanding.

That first winter of the war, so dark in every sense, was brightened for me momentarily by an unsolicited note from Shaw. He wrote: 'Your book is **VERY** well written.' I was as pleased as Punch. Only later, recalling Shaw's predilection for handing out bouquets, did I wonder

whether the Irishman in him had not merely been exercising his blarney. My pleasure was confirmed and doubled, therefore, when I learned that that discerning and lifelong intimate of Shaw's, Beatrice Webb, thought mine the best book on the subject.

All very gratifying. Being but human, I laid all such flattering unction to my soul. But I was not deterred from asking myself later whether yet another book on Shaw would not be superfluous. There were so many already—including of course the complete works of Bernard Shaw. That I settled the problem in the way I did, by compiling the present volume, was because I judged this would supplement rather than clash or compete with the best books already published on the subject.

Were I allowed only two of such books, I would not choose G. K. Chesterton's *George Bernard Shaw*, characteristically brilliant essay though it is, because it is a guess rather than a study and sometimes a wrong guess. Nor would I choose Frank Harris's *Bernard Shaw*, most of which was written by Shaw and not by Harris, the whole being cleverly edited and pieced together by Frank Scully, an American journalist, who did the job without the advantage of knowing Shaw personally. I would choose Archibald Henderson's *George Bernard Shaw: Playboy and Prophet*, and Hesketh Pearson's *Bernard Shaw: His Life and Personality*. Both these books carry an authoritative air. Both were written with Shaw's unstinted help. Both authors know Shaw personally and both were accepted—though not sought—by him as his biographers. In short, both products are straight from the Shavian circus. So much so, indeed, that they are open to criticism upon that very score, the authoritative virtue being present in excess. These horses show their paces, it is true, but we are never sure who cracks the whip—Shaw or his biographers. It is largely Shaw's fault. Always co-operative, painstaking, and thorough when once involved in any undertaking (as Granville-Barker and Vedrenne discovered to their delight and cost), he was always ready with an ell of information when asked for an inch.

Were I forced to quarrel with these two books which I

cannot help admiring greatly, I would say that Professor Henderson's is monumental, that few monuments that are properly monumental are anything else, and that his is not, in my opinion, one of them. If you possess exceptional patience and can digest, say, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, then the Professor's monument may offer you a wholesome and agreeable meal, indeed a feast. I find it too much of a good thing. I find it, too, a Leaning Monument, for it leans dangerously towards idolatry. Not once does the Professor confer upon the subject of his nine hundred odd pages that which he so clearly sometimes deserves—a good thrashing. The book is a noble work for all that, a mighty labour of pains and admiration; and if Shaw's obstinate longevity has left it behind and incomplete, that is not Professor Henderson's fault so much as his misfortune.

No monuments, on the other hand, for Hesketh Pearson! Well-fleshed with factual meat and juicy from cover to cover, his book is weighty yet never ponderous; and who can resist his literary felicity and ebullience? Add to those merits the authoritative note, and there is a book that will gather little dust from being shelved. If quarrel I must, I can only repeat that the authoritative note is sounded too much. Mr. Shaw sits so assiduously at Mr. Pearson's elbow, albeit by invitation, guiding the pen and filling in the gaps, dotting the i's and crossing the t's, that the portrait comes near to a self-portrait. Like Hamlet, the book is too 'full of quotations'—from Shaw. It is really by Hesketh Pearson and Bernard Shaw. This is a pity because, on the too few occasions when Mr. Pearson pushes Mr. Shaw aside, how trenchantly yet justly he deals with him! Over Shakespeare, for instance. But when all is said on this score, I cheerfully agree that the busy Shavian finger in the Pearson pie makes that pie a most notable pie: indeed a unique pie, for no future pie will have just that authentic flavour or so much fresh factual meat.

Made in no captious spirit, these critical remarks may help to establish the point that my book is neither monumental nor authoritative. Throughout all its four editions I kept Shaw well away; much, I believe, to his surprise and

relief. With that twinkle of his that always betokened some exaggeration to come, or something outrageous or shocking or impish to be taken with a pinch of salt, Shaw one day presented me with this bouquet. 'There are two good books on Bernard Shaw,' he said. 'One is by Hesketh Pearson. Now there is nothing extraordinary about that being a good book, because, you see, I helped Pearson to write it. The extraordinary thing is about the other book—by a certain Maurice Colbourne—because it is equally good although I had nothing whatever to do with it and never laid a finger on it.' This referred to the book's third edition; and when soon afterwards I began to write this, the fourth, I decided to persist with the apparently successful policy of keeping Shaw at more than arm's length away. In fact, for the present volume I sought his help only once: and then only to ask the name of his latest play (at the time 'most sacredly secret') and to threaten, failing an answer, to enter it in the chart as Piffle, a provisional title suggested by him to a journalist in 1947. Almost by return of post came a privately printed copy of *Buoyant Billions*, handsomely inscribed. Shaw can be a very understanding, accommodating person.

To be accurate, I also asked him to write a Foreword. His reply, reproduced in facsimile (page vi), is characteristic. It is reasonable, businesslike, firm, thoroughly argued out, unanswerable and final, yet saved from brusqueness by the compliment wrapt in the friendly postscript. Well, if I am bereaved of the Foreword, at least I can chalk up, like the pavement artist: *All My Own Work*.

And who, pray, am I? Who do I think I am to set myself up as an authority on Shaw? Whence this brazen temerity which disdains and discards all outside help and turns its back on the Shavian circus? The answer is two-fold. First, I suppose I am built that way and cannot help it. Secondly, some queer aptitude—some strange twist or kink, if you like, for I take no credit for it nor hold it a virtue—has long enabled me to get into the skins, so to speak, into the very marrow of the minds of two public figures of our time. Bernard Shaw was one, and a very different type, Archbishop William Temple, the other.

Perhaps the easiest part of this singularly useless accomplishment was the physical part, the mere mimicry of voice, expression, and manner, into which I could slide without effort and at will. But I was equally at home in the workings of their minds. I was never at a loss, that is, to know how either Dr. Temple or G. B. S. would act under any given circumstances. It was uncanny; but it was true. When, for example, Shaw 'forbad' me to take Too True to be Good to Canada I took not the slightest notice, but went on rehearsing and pouring out money for the production, knowing that he would extricate himself from the impasse he himself had caused. Nor, again, did I believe for a moment that he would write a Foreword for this book: I asked him, because all I needed was his reply with which to grace these pages.

We have, Shaw and I, certain points in common, it is true. Thus I am an actor: so is Shaw, for one need not be on the stage to act. In his youth Shaw fought diffidence and shyness: I am still fighting them. Then, too, like Shaw, I know what it feels like to have a hobby whose interest competes with and sometimes transcends that of one's profession; for if Shaw was partly responsible for early Socialism in England, I, as a fairly direct cause of the Albertan Government's accession to power in 1935, was partly responsible for early Social Credit in Canada. And, like Shaw, I know what it is to advocate a cause that is not so much unpopular as believed to be crazy, and how to hold an audience, hostile or otherwise, on any subject from any platform from the Albert Hall downwards. Again, Shaw is a bit of an exhibitionist: so am I, for here I am, supposed to be writing about Shaw, yet quite unable to stop my pen from writing about Maurice Colbourne. As for comparing myself with Shaw, is not this a typical piece of Shavian insufferable presumption? If I am insufferable, so is Shaw; and if he can compare himself with Shakespeare, with whom he has nothing in common save his craft, I can cheerfully compare myself with Shaw. At least we are in the same category of men, interested in precisely the same ideas, and pursuing, though by different routes, the same goal. The chief difference between us,

as I see it, is that literary expression comes easily to him, so easily indeed as frequently to amount to inspiration, whereas I express myself so much the reverse of easily that I have nothing, or next to nothing, to show. But I can box the compass of his mind for all that.

In brief, then, in writing about Shaw I use the same process as he confesses to using for his plays—inexplicable divination—and it is something to know that he himself is confident that my powers of divining him will not lead the reader far from the truth about him in this, the fourth, and I hope the final, edition of *The Real Bernard Shaw*.

CHAPTER II.

ROUGH SKETCH IN SIX STROKES

I

BERNARD SHAW is a Victorian. If it be objected that this is a contradiction in terms because Shaw was a rebel, and Victorian therefore an inappropriate name to call him, I must claim that a man is no less a child of his age who sets himself against its current than one who swims with it. However fractious, a child remains a member of the family with its tractable brothers and sisters. And poor indeed would be an age without dissenters. To rate Shaw no Victorian because he resisted Victorian thought is, it seems to me, rather like arguing that the filament of an electric-light bulb has no share in the provision of electric light because it resists the passage of the electric current: the fact being, of course, that without the resistance there could be no light. In any event, it will not be contested that Shaw's resistance to the trend of his era generated light in surprising volume and intensity.

A striking feature of the Victorian age was its passion for respectability and gentility. A leg was called a limb, your mother wore a matron's cap after bearing her first child, and life was divided into the nice and the not nice. If 'fallen women' walked the streets after dark, or children were sent down the mines and harnessed as beasts of burden, or girls slowly poisoned by phosphorus in match factories, Victorians looked complacently elsewhere and went to church on Sunday. The pall of respectability extending far beyond England; the young Shaw early became acquainted with its hypocrisy, smugness, and snobbery in his wide family circle, which enclosed a small clan of genteel relations—even his nursemaids, in their sphere, being snobs. His father's toping, too, seemed sin chiefly because it offended respectability. In an earlier age George Carr Shaw might have been a three-bottle man and proud of it; in a later, he would have consulted a doctor. As it was, his maudlin

shame at an ungenteel habit served to make a total abstainer of his son. Even Shaw's early shyness, or much of it, came of the frightening force of this passion for the conventions and social etiquette in which he was submerged on arrival in England, where everything was *de rigueur*, and failure to toe the line meant ostracism. It was largely a matter of clothes. Young Bernard could never be quite sure whether his top-hat or dress-suit would pass muster.

At that time, too, the Industrial Revolution's sores lay exposed. They smelt to high heaven, and Shaw nosed them out in Marx's *Das Kapital*, whose catalogue of industrial abuses was tinder dry enough to fire any rebel mind. *Das Kapital* is an emotional book, as a visit to Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors is emotional, and Shaw never quite recovered from reading it. He became angry for life, vowed to expose the industrial horrors and to shame his age into ending them. In this, he and Dickens are blood-brother Victorians. Dickens was the more successful crusader because he could bring into play emotions other than anger. Shaw, cold-blooded for all his righteous fury, was never conspicuous in getting wrongs righted. He never tired of inveighing against what seemed to him the barbarities of the prison system, for instance, yet no word or work of his was it, but a play by the quiet undemonstrative Galsworthy—*Justice*—that persuaded Winston Churchill, then Home Secretary, to revise the regulations governing penal solitary confinement.

Into the musical firmament of those days swam a new planet—Wagner. The reception given to all novelty being commonly hostile, Shaw whipped himself up into an enthusiasm to combat the general hostility, but years afterwards confessed that the Wagnerian fires had died down in him: he had come to prefer Handel and Mozart. But his book, *The Perfect Wagnerite*, hailing Wagner as a fellow rebel against the Victorian pattern of society, remains as evidence of the tremendous impact upon him of the new planet. As for the two stars in the British arc of that firmament, the Gemini Gilbert and Sullivan (without mention of whom the shortest note on Victorian music would be incomplete), Shaw did not react noticeably to their bright

twinkling. He was too busy calling attention to the new planet. He had nothing against them, however—far from it—and if challenged would be the first to agree that their works were wholly delightful and quintessentially English. But there would be a sardonic twinkle in his eye, as though to say: 'When the frivolous, fox-hunting, footballing English take to writing opera what can you expect but Gilbert and Sullivan?'

About the very names of Shaw's professional haunts—the Crystal Palace; the Egyptian Hall, the Aquarium, and so forth—there is a Victorian ring. When the Crystal Palace was burnt down in 1936 who but an authentic Victorian would have said, as Shaw said: 'Ah! Now Queen Victoria is really dead?'

His conception of acting, too, was Victorian, because it was founded on the conviction that the actor's job was to *act*, and be gentlemen or knights only incidentally. This is not to say that Shaw advocated barnstorming; but he would say that every actor worth his salt should be capable of barnstorming. He did not prefer Eleanora Duse to Bernhardt because she acted less but because she acted more than the divine Sarah—with her whole mind as well as her body. In his youth Shaw used to watch Barry Sullivan from the gallery, and the memory never dimmed. It was this memory, and the memories of others of Sullivan's kidney, that made Shaw repeatedly tell later generations: 'You cannot overact my plays.'

In nothing, perhaps, is Shaw more a Victorian rebel than in his ideas on education. The Victorian system, which, in brief, consisted in thrashing the classics into unsuitable as well as suitable heads, he never forgave or forgot. True, it died hard. It certainly lasted to my day, for I remember receiving at my prep-school (in 1908) six of the juiciest strokes from a fives-bat for the heinous crime of putting the Latin subject of a sentence into the accusative case. But die it did, eventually, though from Shaw's writings you would not think so. He would not let it die. He would not bury it. From his last words on the subject, as from his first, you would be encouraged to assume that every boy in the land was still being unmercifully thrashed at least

once a week by sadists masquerading as schoolmasters. Did he never learn that punishment is the last remedy to be applied to the tender psyche of the modern child when naughty? and that having goaded its teacher into brandishing a penny ruler, the little beast, far from taking corporal punishment in its stride, is more likely to telephone its parents and haul the exasperated teacher before the nearest magistrate on a charge of assault? If this is Shavian exaggeration descending to levity, it is because the subject lends itself to merry distortion, and Shaw's views on education matter very little. In the first place, he abandoned schooling at the age of fifteen, thus touching only the system's fringe and limiting his evidence to four years; in the second, he cannot give evidence as a parent with children to educate; and in the third, as we have seen, the horse he flogs is dead. Yet on the other hand he is, willy-nilly, the product of the system he deplors. It being the only system there was, he could not be the product of any other. And the product itself is the mighty Bernard Shaw. Can he ever therefore be quite sure that his masters, though they failed to teach what was on the curriculum, did not, in their queer and quiet way, teach something infinitely more valuable, namely, the art of teaching oneself? Your schoolmaster can be a wily bird.

Shaw's profounder thoughts, too, bear all the marks of being hammered out on the anvil of his era. Bergson, Tolstoy, Bradlaugh, Morris, Schopenhauer, Darwin, Butler, Victorians all, among others helped to hammer them. With these, Jacob-like, Shaw wrestled; absorbing, challenging, contradicting, and amending their philosophies until by a process of intellectual give and take he had fashioned God to his liking. The Victorian age was not markedly religious. But, not indifferent to the challenge to orthodox belief thrown down by the accumulating facts of science, notably geology, it was badly shaken by the Darwinian bombshell. Did God exist, and, if so, what was His nature? These were exciting questions, and Shaw was caught up in the excitement to the point of offering to challenge God to prove His existence by striking him dead, withdrawing the offer only at the importunity of his friends.

As in religion and philosophy, so in economics. Jevons, Henry George, Bellamy, and Marx were Shaw's men, whetstones for his knife. So could the evidence be accumulated in almost any field. But perhaps enough has been said to show justification for classifying as a Victorian one still best pictured in a Norfolk jacket riding a bicycle.

II

As long as he is remembered, Shaw will be associated with that attribute which divides the human from the other animals: laughter. Dedicating to Shaw his book on Aristophanes, Professor Gilbert Murray apostrophizes him as one 'Who has Filled Many Lands with Laughter.' He has indeed.

Shavian wit and Shavian humour—here is a mordant revelation of both. Shaw was once visited as an object of international interest and veneration by an eminent Chinese, General Kwei. On being given audience, the general, according to Mr. Hsiung who introduced him, proceeded to admire Shaw feature by feature, praising in turn his hair, forehead, eyes, complexion, and so forth. By the time he had reached the teeth Shaw had had enough. 'So you admire my teeth, general?' said Shaw. The general admired them very much indeed. 'Then perhaps you would care to admire them at closer quarters,' said Shaw, thereupon taking them out and offering them.

Slight as it may be, the anecdote reveals a surprising number of Shavian traits, besides humour and wit. It reveals charm: only a charmer could carry through such a gesture without offence; yet even the charm has a kind of catch in it, and the courtesy a twist. It reveals an aggressive reasonableness, a desire to push a matter to its logical conclusion, especially if the conclusion is likely to be funny. It reveals someone very willing to oblige—someone, that is, quite unlike, say, Rudyard Kipling in similar circumstances—and the more willing if in the act of obliging he can make you look a bit of an ass even at the expense of making himself look an even bigger one. It reveals the unembarrassed exhibitionist and the comedy actor. It

reveals Shaw's knack of regarding himself objectively; and it is no doubt thanks to this knack, this ability to look at himself from the outside as though he were something under the microscope or on the dissecting table, that we are able to forgive him for talking so much about Bernard Shaw. It reveals, too, since false teeth denote a certain decay, that not even Shaw is perfect, just as it reveals that he does not mind parading even his imperfections. And, of course, it reveals that highest and most charitable sense of humour which has been defined as the ability to laugh at oneself.

One anecdote suggests another. In America the film of *Major Barbara* was prefaced by a short film of Shaw in person. In it, he said he felt kinship with a nation that had spent much of its life trying to abolish black slavery, for he had spent much of his trying to abolish white. He also announced that in return for America's gift of fifty old destroyers (it was 1940) he was sending over some of his old plays, filmed, to balance the account. The film in a word was characteristic; now profound, now witty. Running it off one day for friends, at one point Shaw nudged his neighbour and chuckled: 'That was where my dentures slipped!'

It need not be pointed out that Shaw's wit (once employed to make fun even of his mother's funeral) embraces objects other than his own teeth. Universally recognized, it requires no emphasis here.

III

Besides, over-emphasis of the Shavian humour produces a portrait not of Shaw but of his inseparable companion Joey the Clown. The wit, after all, is but a reflection of his intellect, and the humour but a disburdening of his acute sense of the ridiculous. What of his soul? Where is the key to that imponderable? Well, if there were room for only three words on Shaw's tombstone I would carve: HE HATED CRUELTY. Those words, I believe, hold the key.

Haters of cruelty generally fall into one of two categories. In the first are those whose gorge rises only when themselves physically affronted by some act of visible cruelty, preferably a spectacular one, with a child or animal as victim.

In the second are those whose indignation feeds voraciously and vicariously upon the larger cruelties that never touch them personally. These cruelties may be separated from their haters by centuries or barriers of class, by continents or conditions: no matter; so the cruelties be on a grand enough scale haters of them will appear. They make the big haters of the big cruelties: the cruelties of the Spanish Inquisition, for instance, and of all religious persecutions; or of the early-Victorian deportations; or of the later-Victorian industrialism; or of Belsen and other Nazi or Russian concentration camps; or of Hinduism; or of American lynchings. Always their hatred hankers after whole countries and eras, whole social systems and rooted customs to appease its appetite—after massed cruelty. But that haters of cruelty on such a grand scale are themselves proportionately kind and affectionate does not seem to follow. Their private lives may as easily be mean and warped as generous and noble. They are not necessarily in love with loving-kindness; or even intent upon the abolition of cruelty; they are simply born crusaders.

Whether or not he belongs to the first category, Shaw clearly enough belongs to the second. All his life he has crusaded against cruelties of cosmic dimensions, regardless of divine wrath, irrespective of race, country, creed, or colour; and brought whole civilizations and religions under his scourge. Because Jehovah was cruel, Shaw rejected Him. Because they were cruel and therefore false, he rejected the conclusions of the Neo-Darwinians who would have substituted the blind cruelties of Chaos and Night for Jehovah's open-eyed conscious cruelties. Because they seemed cruel to him, he shunned all blood sports. Because it seemed to involve cruelty, he barred meat. Because economic cruelties cried to heaven all around him, he found economics and studied them. Because Socialism seemed the antithesis of the system under which the jungle cruelties

of greed, parasitism, and dog-eat-dog flourished, he became a Socialist. An incurable optimist, he fondly imagined (for a time, at any rate) that cruelty springs from man-made religious and political systems and not from human nature.

Without favour Shaw may be admitted also to the first category of cruelty-haters. He is not particularly fond of animals, however. Not a countryman, he cannot take them (any more than children) for granted. His relations with animals and children are always a little too conscious, a little too studied; and he always seems so naïvely surprised at getting on with them so well that he is inclined to make a song and dance about it. Actually, Shaw is not only not averse to animals, but his poor opinion of the present human animal leads him to respect all other animals by comparison. Who knows, he might say, what profundities may not lie in the philosophy of a cat, or what ecstasy in the flight of a bird?

But to hurt an animal, either for science or sport, let alone to 'larn it to be a toad,' is alien to Shaw's nature. Incorrigibly vicious animals must be killed, of course, including vicious human animals, because unchecked they would eventually make life intolerable and impossible. But that they must be killed or 'kept down' painlessly is the burden of his lifelong plea. Apart from his passion for killing the dangerous, the incorrigible, and the pestiferous, his attitude towards animals is Buddhistic and Franciscan. He would not willingly hurt the smallest of them.

There is a strong streak of fastidiousness in Shaw. It drives him to regard flesh-eating as 'cannibalism with the heroic dish omitted,' and to induce a guest to come to lunch with the assurance: 'You needn't be afraid. We always have plenty of dead bodies for my wife to eat.' To this streak of squeamishness, too, may be traced Shaw's rejection of the God of his fathers, when he found incredible an Almighty Being who, being all-mighty, could yet choose to be coarse enough to combine in his handiwork of Man the reproductive and the excretory organs.

Add to this fastidious streak a streak of natural rebellion and a tendency to push an idea to its limit, and it becomes clear why Shaw extends his hatred of cruelty to hatred of

corporal punishment. An abnormally fastidious or rebellious boy will no doubt object strongly to adopting the admittedly ungraceful posture demanded for corporal punishment, quite apart from any fear of the pain about to descend. Putting his objection mildly, he would condemn the whole proceeding as 'infradig.' The ordinary boy, on the other hand, looks on corporal punishment as neither below his dignity, nor unfair, nor cruel, but as part of a code and bargain. Bad bargain for him though it is, he keeps his part of it with a good grace and, if he can, with a stiff upper lip. His contempt is roused only if the master fulfils his part of the bargain in a lily-livered way.

Shaw's assertion that 'whipping is a form of debauchery' is moonshine and nonsense. No doubt in the hands of a confirmed sadist whipping could be debauched. So could the Holy Communion in the hands of a drunken priest, but that is no reason to discontinue its celebration. I can only testify as one who whipped and was whipped in the normal course of school life that I recall in myself no dark pleasures, either sadistic or masochistic, and will add that William Temple, then a headmaster, told me that his objection to birching was only that it made him 'like Hamlet, scant of breath.' The truth is, with corporal punishment both masters and boys know where they are. 'If I do this and am caught I shall get six of the best,' says the boy to himself, adding 'I'll risk it'—or not, as he chooses; and most boys, given the alternative of a beating and two successive half-holidays at drill in the gym or writing a thousand lines, would gladly choose the beating.

As with masters and boys, so with prison authorities and criminals: neither 'infradignity' nor cruelty is inherent in the idea or administration of adult corporal punishment, which is simply the best effort yet made in our imperfect human fashion to find a punishment that fits certain crimes.

Capital punishment, on the contrary, Shaw would retain for two reasons. First, it is necessary. Second, its alternative of prolonged incarceration, supervision, and punishment, is cruel. Walking over the Malvern Hills soon

after his return from Russia, Shaw described to me with gusto and approval the conduct of a Russian 'trial.' It seems that the judge, having decided in his own mind that the accused was guilty, made some secret signal, whereupon the prisoner, knowing nothing about it, was killed instantaneously by a shot in the back of his head. To warn him; to let him see the gun, to give him time to say a farewell to the wife of his bosom or a prayer to his God, would have caused him moments or hours of agony and anguish and therefore been cruel. That, at least, was the idea; and Shaw fell for it, hook, line; and sinker, for it corresponded with his own ideas for the painless killing of undesirables. Without arguing the point, one could point out that, the dead man apart, such procedure involved mental cruelty not only to the dead man's family, but to the two hundred million odd surviving Russians, because under such a system no Russian could be quite certain that he, too, would not be bumped off in like summary fashion, without warning, 'cut off even in the blossoms of his sin, unhusel'd; disappointed, unanel'd; no reckoning made, but sent to his account with all his imperfections on his head.' Be that as it may, in *On the Rocks* Preface (a plea for killing) Shaw writes: 'I dislike cruelty, even cruelty to other people, and should therefore like to see all cruel people'—among others—'exterminated. But I should recoil with horror from a proposal to punish them.'

Lastly, about Shaw's personal kindness there is no doubt. None could be kinder, when in the vein. With evidence for this abounding, four witnesses are sufficient here. Sir Edward Elgar called him 'the kindest and possibly the dearest fellow on earth'; Dean Inge, 'one of the kindest friends I have ever had'; Professor Gilbert Murray, 'one of the kindest and most generous of men'; and Lady Gregory, 'the gentlest of my friends.' Not to idolize Shaw let it be added that he has his moods. Who hasn't? If he suffers fools and hypocrites no more gladly than most, if at times he likes to have people on toast and at others to keep them on tenterhooks, and if in his feline moods he gives a passable imitation of a cat playing with a mouse, he never fails, even when unkind, to be charming.

IV

If Shaw were asked for a stroke to the lightning sketch attempted in this chapter, he would be likely to say, as he once said in effect to Archibald Henderson: 'Tell people I am really a normal, quiet, workaday sort of a fellow, and that the most extraordinary thing about me is my ordinariness.'

This ordinariness can be established in a number of ways. To begin with, there is Shaw's family, and his whole upbringing, both of them average and therefore ordinary. He was neither upper class nor lower class, but middle; neither rich nor poor, but middling; neither scholar nor dunce, neither lout nor bookworm, neither beast nor prig, but in between all these. He is fond of dilating on his youthful sensitivity, but this is normal, not exceptional, most boys being as sensitive, hiddenly, as a crab without its shell. So normal was everything about the youthful Shaw, indeed, that there is a kernel of truth in the exaggeration that the only thing about him out of the ordinary was, according to his oculist, abnormally perfect eyesight.

Next, there is a complete absence in Shaw of those queer traits and foibles that beset and sometimes adorn extraordinary men and geniuses. It seemed quite in keeping with the man that G. K. Chesterton, for instance, was so baffled by string and brown paper that he was incapable of doing up the simplest parcel; and that Shelley ran away with two women and a donkey to carry their baggage; and that Thomas Hardy fought passionately against the installation of a telephone in his house; and that Hitler's temper made him chew carpets: for they were geniuses. We shall look in vain for comparable idiosyncrasies or behaviour in Shaw. He can fill a hot-water bottle securely, make his own bed; do up parcels neatly, mend bicycle punctures, manipulate a camera, drive a car passably well; and, in general, deal with the gadgets and amenities of his generation; from telephones to aircraft, without temperamental bewilderment or fuss. In short, like ordinary John Citizen, he goes quietly and sanely about the business of living.

The Shavian setting, too, is almost embarrassingly ordinary. First the Dublin house, undistinguished in itself and indistinguishable from its neighbours; then a succession of four mediocre houses or floors of houses in London; followed, after marriage, by a flat, and eventually a house where the suburbs touch the country. This house, in Hertfordshire, comfortable enough, is a very ordinary affair, a 'builder's job.' Its furnishings are in neither good taste nor bad, and its garden is unremarkable.

And the life lived in this setting—that of the good, but not extraordinarily good son who sows his wild oats, though belatedly, and dwindles into a companionable husband and a prompt if protesting ratepayer, supporting his parish church with his purse rather than his presence—is so ordinary that it reads like the entry for Everyman in *Who's Who*.

There are no marks of wayward genius or of flamboyant temperament about this Compleat Bourgeois, who is never more at home than when slaving away on committees and councils where he shines with a sort of hard, imaginative commonsense. He is business-like, and proud of it. And in his professional work he plods along as and when the spirit moves him, doggedly humdrum, like a lively ant or a patient beaver.

Even his appearance is not as extraordinary as it seems. The beard itself was ordinary once, for Victorians affected beards. True, its colour was conspicuous; but that was more a family than a personal affair, one of Shaw's sisters having a head of hair of a redness not seen, so Shaw tells us, outside the highlands of Scotland. Moreover, the beard was something of an accident, for its owner grew it only when an attack of smallpox prevented him from shaving.

Shaw is generally considered an original thinker and an original writer. He is neither. His religion and philosophy he took from Bunyan, Shelley, Lamarck, Schopenhauer, Butler, and Bergson, among others; while his ideas on economics are a jigsaw formed from Ricardo's theory of rent, Jevons's theory of value, Marx's theory of surplus rent, and Bellamy's and Cobden-Sanderson's national dividend theory, each theory being carpentered sufficiently to

fit the Shavian picture. In fairness to Shaw, however, it should be added that no author could have set forth his indebtedness to others more frankly or more fully. As with his thinking, so with his writing. Far from being original, revolutionary, or out of the ordinary, Shaw insists that the technique of his prefaces go back to Dryden and that of his plays to the world's first clown. 'I am,' he said truly, 'an expert picker of other men's brains'—a truth caught by Sir Max Beerbohm in the cartoon where Shaw, accused of wearing other men's clothes patched together by himself, is made to say, 'Ah, but look at the patches!'

Finally here is a document the subject of which, at least in Townshend eyes, is clearly not even a budding genius, but just an ordinary, trustworthy, capable, nice young man.

9th August, 1878.

15 MOLESWORTH ST., DUBLIN.

Mr. George Bernard Shaw served in our office from 1st of November 1871 to 31st of March 1876 when he left at his own desire. He entered as a youth and left us having attained to the position of cashier. He is a young man of great business capacity, strict accuracy, and was thoroughly reliable and trustworthy. Anything given to him to do was always accurately and well done. We parted from him with regrets and shall always be glad to hear of his welfare.

(Signed) UNIACKE TOWNSHEND & Co.,
Land Agents.

How, then, has this ordinary man 'with the temperament of a schoolmaster and the pursuits of a vestryman' (as he has described himself) acquired his extraordinary reputation? The answer is: By manufacturing it. The real Bernard Shaw, being something of a stranger and somewhat sensitive and shy, needed someone or something aggressive to help him face the world's slings and arrows. He therefore set about fashioning an article, which we can regard as either a companion or a suit of armour or a mask, and called it G. B. S.

Anything startling, ferocious, or unconventional went into the making of G. B. S. Nothing came amiss so it

was strident enough, provocative enough, contradictory enough. That is why the beard was spared: it helped in the manufacture of the myth. 'Nothing succeeds like excess' was the slogan of this one-man factory. Tubs were thumped. Trumpet blares were sounded. Levity was signed on, impiety put to work, and impudence put on overtime. Gods were challenged. Censors and chamberlains were taught their business and kicked into corners. Comparisons with Shakespeare were flung into a cauldron already well stocked with equally impious ingredients. What fun—G. B. S. was in the making. And, eventually, G. B. S. was made. The mask fitted, and Shaw has worn it ever since. Now, after long usage, he is not quite sure which is Shaw and which is G. B. S., which the mask and which himself.

In everything undertaken by Shaw there is evidence of infinite pains, and the manufacture of the fabulous G. B. S. is no exception. The thoroughness and craftsmanship of the job is attested every time a stranger, after meeting Shaw for the first time, exclaims: 'But he is so *nice*! I expected . . .' He had expected, not Shaw, but the ferocious G. B. S.

V

Our fifth stroke may well start from this G. B. S. ferocity, Shaw never being more ferocious than when trying to deal with the rights and wrongs of war.

In time of war is Shaw a patriot? a traitor? a pacifist? or what? It all depends. Though Irish, he is not necessarily always 'Agin the Gov'mint,' nor his motto 'T'other Man's Country, Right or Wrong.' He supported the Boer War, though a not inconsiderable number of Britons, led by such public men as Lloyd George and G. K. Chesterton, denounced it. He supported it because his hatred of inefficiency and waste, even greater than his hatred of imperialism, persuaded him that the vastness of South Africa would be better developed by British resources than by what appeared to him to be parochial-minded collections

of unenlightened, strip-farming, Bible-thumping fundamentalists.

In the First World War, on the other hand, Shaw could not be called pro-British. Neither could he be called pro-German. Rather he assumed, unasked, the role of an Irish umpire, backing the British with all the annoying solicitude of a near relation privileged to draw attention to their shortcomings and faults.

The Second World War presented the additional problem of a mad gorilla in the shape of Hitler. Yet, even after its outbreak, Shaw still believed in Hitler's honesty. He proposed that peace should be made acknowledging half Poland as Hitler's by right of conquest, and quaintly assumed that thereafter the gorilla would remain content; and this, in spite of Hitler's repeated perfidies culminating in the supreme perfidy of the Munich Pact a year before. Shaw's peace proposal appeared in the *New Statesman* in October 1939. Happily by then every Tom, Dick, and Harry in the land had long since decided that a gorilla could not be trusted to fight according to Queensberry Rules, and that the only course to take with a mad gorilla was to render it powerless once and for all; whatever the cost. At what belated date the octogenarian Simpleton of the British Isles also reached these conclusions to catch up with the truth is not revealed, because for the rest of the war he kept reasonably silent.

Neither patriot nor traitor nor pacifist, in war Shaw is that out-of-place and embarrassing creature, the Man of Reason. He never fully realized that reason must play its innings before war breaks out, not after. Reason will work overtime and with a will to avoid war, going to any reasonable lengths, making every reasonable offer; attempting every reasonable compromise, exploring every reasonable avenue; but once these overtures fail and war breaks out, reason is dismissed. Unreasonable passions and illogical emotions rush in to take its place. When Mars seizes the baton the player of the delicate pipes of reason had best pack up and slip out from the orchestra until war's symphony is over. No part in it is scored for him. If he persists in piping he can produce only discords, however pure his

tone or lofty his notes. His tune may not be wrong, but it is not in the score. Wherefore Shaw, so expert a player on this instrument, grates on the general ear in time of war.

The very titles of Shaw's war writings—Commonsense about the War (1914) and Uncommonsense about the War (1939)—reveal his blindness to this truth. Both titles presuppose that the moral issues of war can be discussed on a basis of sense, common or uncommon. Maybe they can; but not while the guns are firing and the bombs dropping. The truisms about war's slaughter being 'senseless' and about no one 'in his senses' making war (or at any rate modern war) are unshakable, for there is then always somewhere someone who is out of his senses, some mad dog of a megalomaniac, be it an individual, a clique or nation, with whom one cannot reason. Sense and war are strangers to each other; and pamphlets seeking to introduce them, or trying to inject any kind of sense except military sense into war, are best entitled Nonsense about War.

Shaw's Nonsense is none the less rich in Shavian phenomena. The 1914 pamphlet, for instance, shows him in his familiar guise of a fighting, frantic, writhing, exasperated anti-romantic. He could never get over, or forgive, England's luck in being forced to declare war on a technical point (Germany's invasion of Belgium in defiance of a treaty), which provided her with a ready-made clarion call and battle-cry; ensured her morale; lifted her in the eyes of the world to heights of incalculable moral superiority; and appointed her, as the world's cartoonists were quick to see, the gallant rescuer of the wronged; the chivalrous avenger of the weak. All this, fulminated Shaw; was stuff and nonsense. It wasn't. It was true. The invasion of 'poor little Belgium' by 'great big Germany' was the British *casus belli*. It happened so. It was not less the truth for being also a piece of luck. It was not less the truth for being only a single truth and not the whole truth. But it was a truth that Shaw, recoiling as usual from sentiment and emotion, could not abide.

Unable to demolish this truth, Shaw skilfully circumvented it by writing about the indirect causes of the war, such as the race in armaments, economic competition, and

so forth. Boiled down, his thousands of words amounted to the stupendous accusation that Englishmen, no less than Germans, were sinful sons of Adam and not angels with wings. Englishmen, intent on an obstinate war whose tide had not yet turned in their favour, refused to stop in their tracks either to hail or denounce such a profound revelation: they went on trying to win the war.

The same pamphlet also reveals the Irishman in Shaw. It is written with gusto. Did the world acclaim England as an avenger? Then Shaw would show the world! Was Britannia on a pedestal? Then Shaw would show her her proper place! Was she a lady-errant, a veritable female Perseus? Then Shaw would larn her! Although he once said of himself, 'Who am I that I should be just?' yet in Commonsense about the War he tried to be fair to both sides. His Irish blood ran too strongly, however. Somehow the sword of reason he laboured to forge, obstinately took on the shape of an Irish shillelagh with which to belabour the English with unconcealed relish. It was in his blood. Besides, if there was a fight going on somewhere, then, bedad, he would be in it too! As a result, the efforts of this Irishman to 'help' were abortive. The pamphlet helped only to discredit the Allied cause, and to discourage those fighting for it. It helped only the enemy. In 1915, indeed, the enemy derived such comfort from its views as to use them to incite the North African Moors to rebel against France. Needless to say, Shaw's reward was execration at home. He was cut; mentally consigned to the Tower of London; people left a room if he entered it; if he served on a council or committee, others hesitated or refused to serve; in short, he suffered—though with perfect equanimity—the fate of any one who attempts to stem the emotions loosed by war and cold-bloodedly analyse them by the tests of reason.

It would be misleading, however, to suppose that Shaw remained an object of public odium throughout the 1914 war. Those in high places knew their man. They knew that Shaw was fundamentally a man of decorum: in short, a gentleman. The Moorish business warned him. He knew how far to go, and when to stop. He stopped, and

in 1917 accepted a personal invitation from the British commander-in-chief, then Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, to tour the Western Front. No one threw things.

The fact that in war Shaw is as much out of his element, reason, as a fish out of water, does not discount his prophetic skill in war and peace alike. What prophecy was shrewder or more accurate than Shaw's of 1940, at the age of eighty-four? 'The prospect,' he wrote, 'is not tempting; for if we lose we shall be bled white by the victors, and if we win we shall have to bleed ourselves white. . . . If I were a gambler I should back the neutrals for the real win, with Russia and the United States neck and neck.'

VI

The final stroke of this lightning sketch is at once a warning and an accusation.

Shaw is not infallible, not a substitute for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. This warning is the more necessary because, while carefully disclaiming omniscience, Shaw yet likes to play Sir Oracle; and also because he, probably more than any other polemical writer, gives the impression of knowing all the answers. He has a winning way with him. Let us beware of it! His approach is so inviting, his company so lively, his solicitude for your understanding so painstaking, his meaning so clear, his dynamite so well laid, and his explosions so well timed that nothing is more fatally easy than to succumb to the vigour of his attack. With him, argument becomes an art. Those full-dress arguments, his essays and prefaces, are so decked out and embellished, so buttressed and reinforced with the artifices of the born debater; and the pains he takes to convert his audience, be it a Royal Commission inquiring into the censorship, vivisectionists, anti-Ibsenites, or what you will, are so meticulous that unless on their guard the layman and the neophyte collapse with: 'What a performance! What a man! There is nothing he does not know.'

Now not only does Shaw not know everything, but what he does know he reddens with his political opinions. In

other words, Shaw is a propagandist; and, like most propagandists, is often more concerned with making converts than careful of the truth. He is a special pleader, an eager, artful, learned counsel. As such he is entitled to much latitude: he may make free with hyperbole; entrance us with side issues or bemuse us with rhetoric; proffer half-truths for truths; ignore inconvenient facts, and so on: all to make his point. But there is a limit to the latitude allowed to special pleading, and distortion of facts into falsehoods or bleaching black facts white is outside that limit. When Shaw steps outside that limit to be guilty of such distortion, he invites one of those periodical salutary thrashings so conspicuously spared in books about him. He shall not go scot-free in this book.

To call a man a propagandist is not to compliment him, since experiments in mass psychology have proved that propaganda can be quite as effective when based on lies as on truth. As Hitler said: 'Choose not only a lie but a thumping one, and it will be believed if only it is repeated loudly enough and often enough.' Well, the German lie is smashed—at least for a time. But the Russian lie not only survives, but persists and spreads; a lie that Shaw, by weaving into his later works threads of Russian propaganda, has faithfully served. Singly, these threads are of little account, easily snapped; but together they form a cord strong enough to trip the open-minded. Theirs is a cumulative effect, got by Shaw's favourite method of iteration. They vary from exaggerations and assumptions to assertions or suggestions flatly contradicted by the facts. Here is a sample:

. . . For it must be admitted that a private soldier, outside *that surprising centre of culture, the Red Army of Russia*, has so little to be happy about. . . .

If this falsehood—which I have put in the spotlight of italics—means anything, it means that the Red Army is, or was, a centre of culture.

That surprising centre of culture, the Red Army. First, we may be confident that Shaw means what he says. He is not trying to be funny. He is not being sarcastic. He

never tries to be funny about Russia, is never sarcastic about Russia. Russia is the apple of his eye and his political Benjamin, his intense interest in the Soviet way of life feeding and thriving on his disgust with the Western or capitalistic way of life. His self-appointed mission being to belabour the latter until its practitioners are brought to conviction of sin, it was natural that Shaw should seize on post-1917 non-capitalistic Russia as a stick to hit with. For this reason all his references to Russia are as serious as his belabouring business; that is, very serious indeed. He does not fool around or toy with his stoutest stick, but plies it.

Secondly, the date, like the context, of Shaw's statement is immaterial (it occurs in the preface to *Too True to be Good* and was written in 1931). Shaw cannot claim that what was true of the Red Army in 1931 was no longer true in 1945, when that army offered itself for the worlds' inspection. Even English soldiers who knew in 1931 how to read and write and how to tell the time and wind a watch intelligently, had not forgotten how to do these things in 1945, uncultured as they were. Yet most Red Army soldiers on view in 1945 could do none of these things.

True, most of the 1931 Red Army was destroyed by the Germans. But in all armies tradition and routine persist. An army's spirit carries on, old soldiers never die, and with a little training and discipline the new soldier soon takes on the likeness and the outlook of the old. Iron Communist discipline alone would have ensured that what culture there was in the Red Army in 1931 would still be there, however frayed, in 1945. Indeed it would be more in evidence than before, judging by other armies, all of whom progressed and developed in this way and that between 1931 and 1945, despite casualties and the other harassments of war. Even the 'Contemptible' British Army progressed. It was democratized (for good or ill); its soldiers, no longer cannon fodder, became highly trained experts in the art of handling war's increasingly complex killing apparatus; while such devices as the O.C.T.U. and A.B.C.A. were instituted to stimulate the soldier's mind and fit him

for responsibility and leadership. If such developments occurred in the small army of a peace-loving, navy-minded nation, how much more striking must have been those in an army like the Red Army; the darling pride and sole shield of All the Russias.

If it is possible, then—and it is—to judge the British Tommy of 1931 by what he is to-day, it is equally possible and equally fair to judge the Russian soldier of that date by what he has shown himself to be from 1945 onwards. Let us briefly examine him, then, now that he has come under scrutiny of Western eyes in such places as Vienna and Berlin, and compare him with his British and American counterpart. One thing is immediately clear. Not the most prolonged or charitable search can find any culture in the Russian soldier; not a vestige, not a trace; only the most appalling and unbelievable lack of it.

I have collected from various witnesses of Russian soldiers' conduct some statements that, for this generation at least, it may seem redundant to set down. But there is the future to be considered. Memories are so short that in twenty years' time it may well be forgotten what sort of picture the Red Army presented off the battlefield at the end of Hitler's war. Shaw's description of it as a centre of culture may be believed unquestioned. It will certainly be believed if the Red Army is again victoriously employed, but in that event what is set down here will not matter because this book, or at least this chapter of it, will be publicly burnt in Trafalgar Square. In the hope, however, that it will be extant twenty years hence, I set down in it, reluctantly yet for the record and the future's sake, these vouched-for facts. Since this is not a political book, they seek to discredit, not the Russian soldier, but Shaw, sufficiently to convict him beyond a peradventure of being, when it suits him, a wild unscrupulous distorter.

(i) There were Communists in Vienna before the Red Army came, quite a Party of them. Soon after the Red Army came there were no Communists in Vienna; no Viennese Communists, that is. 'At least,' added my Austrian informant who was there, 'no willing ones.' Vienna, itself a not uncultured city, had been brought

face to face with the Russian soldier. She did not find him cultured.

(ii) On a Murmansk dock in 1943 a British sailor was fixing a makeshift splint to a Russian soldier whom he had seen slip on the ice and break his leg. An official came along and shot the helpless soldier dead, explaining, so the sailor eventually understood, that the soldier was not worth the cost of his repair. Strange way to regard and to treat a unit of a centre of culture!

(iii) In one house in the Austrian countryside (and also in tens of thousands of other houses throughout eastern occupied Europe, but I cannot vouch for them) Russian soldiers were highly delighted with the water closets they found. These they thought were for washing in and proceeded to use accordingly. The other rooms were used as lavatories, indiscriminately.

(iv) In 1945 some 80,000 Russian soldiers made a protracted stay in England, encamped, before being finally transported to Russian ports in British ships. These men had been forced to fight for Germany, or at any rate to wear German uniform. Hailing from every part of Russia, they formed a haphazard cross-section of the entire Red Army, and as such were worth observing. About eighty per cent were illiterate. Now some hundreds among the first shipment, having glimpsed a world outside, did all they could not to return to Russia, until eventually a Russian general went to their camps to persuade them; to command them; and finally to convince them, on his word as a Russian general, that all would be forgiven and forgotten and the Soviet Government would welcome them back to Russia. So the reluctant sailed with the rest. They were landed first; and their welcome, assured on a general's word of honour, was to be marched into a shed on the quayside and shot. British sailors heard the volleys. Then, no doubt chastened by this exemplary lesson, the rest of the Russians went ashore. If there is any connection between this grim happening and culture, it arises not only from the obvious fact that honour and the promised word are part and parcel of any culture worth having, but from the inescapable suspicion that if any of that shipload contained

any cultured Russian soldiers, those shot included the majority of them.

(v) In an Austrian street in daylight two Russians leisurely removed the wedding rings from two women. The police, when asked to take action, said 'No. If we do anything about it the Russians will imprison us.' 'Were the thieves officers or privates?' I asked. 'Not officers. Just soldiers,' said my informant. Then she went on: 'But in the lorry which drove to my sister's house and took away all her furniture were two officers. My sister knew they were officers because they had stayed in her house some days before. I went with her to the Russian commandant for the whole area to complain.' She shrugged her shoulders. 'He laughed, and said: "Go away."'

(vi) Upon the arrival of Russian soldiers in an Austrian town, the female part of its population quickly acquired the habit of walking in the middle of the road instead of on the pavement, by day as well as by night, this making it somewhat less easy for the soldiers to draw women and girls into the houses and rape and rob them. I met a young girl from this town who at last had been permitted to join her mother in Switzerland. Her mother told me it had taken more than three months to persuade her daughter to walk on a pavement.

To conclude: the man who can write describing the Red Army at any time since its inception in 1918 as a 'surprising centre of culture,' can write anything, however fantastic. In other words, Shaw's writings are suspect. They must be taken with more than a pinch of salt, and continually be put through Truth's sieve. And this, for a writer who in his political works wants above all to be taken seriously and believed, is disastrous.

After a thrashing comes forgiveness. Shaw meant well. His conscience is clear. He is sincerely anxious to show men the path of salvation; not to lead them to the pit of destruction. His intentions are honest. Alas, that is not enough: men must be judged by their fruits. Often has Shaw paraphrased the old saying that hell is paved with

good intentions by asserting that the world's chief miseries spring from the activities of its so-called good men. If this is so, we must number Shaw high among the 'good' men, no doubt to his consternation; for, judging by the Communist miseries he has encouraged and helped to unleash, he must be a very 'good' man indeed.

For being placed in such queer company against his will, Shaw's consolation must be the meagre one that, although in part responsible for the calamities to come, he will nevertheless be able to avoid them. Long before they reach the full flood of their suffering and fury, he will be dead.

CHAPTER III

IRELAND

SURPRISINGLY enough, Bernard Shaw is descended, so one of his fourteen uncles assured him, from that immortalized Macduff, Thane of Fife, who, as Macbeth found to his cost, 'was from his mother's womb untimely ripp'd.' But that was a long time ago, and there is little discernible in Shaw of his warlike ancestor. The resemblance was rather to the Devil; and later, with advancing years, to Methuselah. But it is a mistake to think of him as old. 'To grow old' is a contradiction in terms: one gets old, or becomes old, only when one no longer grows. And Shaw is always growing. When a man stops growing, he gives up, sits back, and retires. Shaw will never retire but into his grave. Until then he will be always on the move, always keeping up with the troops, so to speak, and always feeling obliged to overwhelm the whole army, from generals to batmen, with a derisive torrent of affectionate abuse on the plea that every man jack of it is out of step but he.

Shaw was born in Dublin in the mid-Victorian year of 1856, into a Protestant family with a wide periphery of uncles and aunts. His father was a happy-go-lucky merchant, and his mother was musical from her vocal cords to the tips of her fingers. She was also a capable and practical woman, always busy trying to make both ends meet. They were poor, not because they had no money, but because they had a position to keep up and never enough money to keep it up on. The history of the Shaws is the history of all families of Younger Sons. Bernard's father, George Carr Shaw, was second cousin to a baronet, and his mother the daughter of a country gentleman whose rule was, when in difficulties, mortgage. Shabby and genteel, their poverty was that of poor relations with its wretched and unending struggle to keep up appearances at any cost.

With two sisters but no brothers to keep him company

at home, the young George Bernard was packed off to school like any other boy, to keep him out of mischief and out of his mother's way when she was busiest about the house. School and he had little use for each other; and he paid scant attention to his lessons, though it must not be supposed that he was lazier than most boys. He was Irish; and with the Irish flexibility of mind he was quick to apprehend what would and what would not be useful to him in later life. Within him lay a capacity for educating himself in his own good time and in a way that had no connection with school routines or curriculums. When it was suggested to him in later life that he had 'gained far more from listening to his mother and her friends singing Mozart than from all his reading put together,' his answer was an affirmative 'Hooray!'

The entire family was musical. His mother played the piano and sang, his father played the trombone, his eldest uncle the now obsolete ophicleide, this aunt the violoncello, that aunt the harp and tambourine, and his elder sister had a beautiful singing voice. In these days of entertainment from the ether such a concentration of talent seems proper only to a concert party. But in those days entertainment had to be found locally; and instead of asking, 'How about some bridge?' or 'Shall we watch the news?' a hostess would inquire whether her guests had brought their pieces.

Bernard Shaw himself, however, mastered no orthodox musical instrument. He was content to make music with the English language.

Music and Shaw, never far apart and companions for life, were continually rubbing shoulders. Thus not only is there a musical quality about Shavian prose; not only do acts of his plays—the last of Geneva and the first of Good King Charles, for instance—often suggest the structure and sweep of symphonic movements, and Man and Superman's Hell Scene a concerto for four instruments; not only was it to his mother's singing lessons and the cash they brought in that he owed his survival when, a penniless unemployed, he lived on her in London, just as he owed to her method of voice production his ability to speak in public under all conditions without tiring his voice; not only was it as a

musical critic that he got his foot set firmly on the first rung of the ladder; but Music, in the magnetic personality of George John Vandeleur Lee, brought about his first change of address.

Musically speaking, Lee swept Shaw's mother off her feet, and together they so filled 33 Synge Street, the Shaws' small house where Bernard was born, with the musical din of voice training, scales, operatic scores, and musical evenings, that the neighbours complained. The dynamic Lee promptly transported the whole family to bigger quarters at 1 Hatch Street, where they lived, Lee included (but without the faintest breath of scandal), until 1872 when Mrs. Shaw and her two daughters, preceded by Lee, ventured to London. Left behind in Dublin, Mr. Shaw and his sixteen-year-old son went into lodgings at 61 Harcourt Street.

The casual, come-and-go-as-you-please Bohemian atmosphere of the Hatch Street *ménage* was somewhat spoilt by respectable society's discovery of a skeleton there. Not that it was difficult to discover, for, in the person of Shaw's father, it refused to be confined to its cupboard. The head of the family, in theory a teetotaler, drank. When the habit worsted him he was racked with shame and humiliation, but he remained incurable. He had, however, a strong sense of the ludicrous, and was so completely possessed by the comic spirit that what in most men's lives would have been material for tragedy, in his became merely uproarious anticlimaxes. Thus when he was told that his business had collapsed, and ruin stared him in the face, he found the catastrophe so irresistibly amusing that he had to retreat hastily from the office to an empty corner of the warehouse, and laugh until he was exhausted. This irrepressible comic sense prevented his bouts of drinking from becoming sordid; and his family felt instinctively that by laughing at the humiliations he brought on them they would render them at least endurable. Of this gift for comedy Bernard Shaw inherited a full share. With ribald common sense and the ability to assess an amiable weakness at its true value, he remarks that if one cannot get rid of a family skeleton one may as well make it dance, and describes a

scene as follows, showing how infectious the comic spirit can be when let loose in an Irish family that is determined to keep life tolerable. 'A boy who has seen "the governor," with an imperfectly wrapped-up goose under one arm and a ham in the same condition in the other (both purchased under heaven knows what delusion of festivity), butting at the garden wall in the belief that he was pushing open the gate, and transforming his top-hat to a concertina in the process, and who, instead of being overwhelmed with shame and anxiety at the spectacle, has been so disabled by merriment (uproariously shared by a maternal uncle) that he has hardly been able to rush to the rescue of the hat and pilot its wearer to safety, is clearly not a boy who will make tragedies of trifles instead of making trifles of tragedies.'

To the outside world, however, Mr. Shaw's alcoholic antics were beyond a joke, and polite society quietly but firmly dropped the Shaws beyond the pale. The result was that their naturally shy son became still shyer; and grew up in abysmal ignorance of ordinary social routine. Now when a sensitive boy becomes conscious of his social deficiencies the first thing he does, if he has any spirit, is to hide them if he cannot make them good. To do this he will devise a protective armour with infinite cunning, much as a crustacean will fit itself with a shell, and in it will be found qualities exactly the opposite of those in which he is deficient. Being a very sensitive boy, and possessing a great deal of spirit, the young Bernard manufactured his own anti-shy armament so effectively; barbing himself with arrogance and steeling himself to self-assertion; that his elders may well have found him intolerably impudent. Let us hold fast to this shyness of Shaw's. When we meet it again, as we shall, let us recognize it for what it is, an integral part of the man. If we dismiss his shyness as affected, we shall be dismissing some of the real Bernard Shaw; and so be missing our man. If he still puts on a bold front, and still squares up to the world with aggressive self-assertion, it is because he is still basically shy. No doubt he has worn his armour for so long and taken such care to make it fit closely that it has gradually worked, so to speak, under his skin. Now it is second nature to him,

and he could not remove it if he would. But the shyness is there just the same, more than skin deep.

Schooling over and turned fifteen, one of the uncles found him a post in Dublin with a leading firm of land agents; and from them, as junior clerk or glorified office boy, Bernard Shaw drew his first money, at the then not outrageous rate of eighteen shillings a month. To his own inner dismay he made good. His heart was not in clerking, but it had to be done, so he did it, if not with all his might, as efficiently as his self-esteem demanded. When the principals were out it was he who induced the gentlemen apprentices to sing operatic selections; but when the cashiership fell vacant it was he who filled it, even changing his sloping straggly handwriting to the clear, neat, upright one we know to-day, as being more suitable for entries in the cash book. His salary rose slowly and steadily, until by the time he was nineteen it had reached £84 a year. But business success was not what he craved for. Yet it seemed to be coming to him relentlessly, advancing on him threateningly, engulfingly. Something had to be done by way of escape, and done quickly. He gave a month's notice. And so, in March 1876, he broke loose. By April he was in England, in his twentieth year, and he did not set foot in Ireland again for twenty-nine years, until 1905, when he paid it a visit to please his wife. On arriving at Euston Station he was afraid to take a hansom cab lest he should make a fool of himself by not knowing how to get into it. So he took a four-wheeled 'growler,' and drove across London to his mother's house in Kensington.

Let us delay a moment before entering that house. One or two aspects of Shaw's youth call for comment, and his adult attitude to Ireland too is also probably best disposed of here.

While only a boy, Shaw visited Dublin's Mountjoy Prison. The visit was not paid with any sociological or morbid intent: an acquaintance took him, much as though he were taking him to the Zoo. None the less the prison and its inmates made a deep impression on the boy, and fifty years later, writing of the old lags he saw that day, Shaw records that the impression which 'stuck longest and

hardest, was that it was impossible to reform such men, it was useless to torture them, and dangerous to release them.' The seeds of Bernard Shaw's ideas concerning crime and punishment and cruelty were sown that day. Indeed, one can almost see them starting furiously to germinate as he returned through the prison gates into the outer air.

The outer air that most refreshed him young Bernard found outside Dublin on Dalkey Hill. The Shaws had a cottage there they used in summer that Lee had bought and presented to Mrs. Shaw. It looked upon the Wicklow Mountains in the distance, and the garden at its back commanded Dublin Bay. Dalkey Hill! where the gorse spread over the down through the springy green turf, golden in the soft warm sea air against a white-clouded blue sky. 'The happiest moment of my life,' Shaw recorded at the age of ninety, 'was when as a child I was told by my mother that we were going to move from our Dublin street to Dalkey Hill in sight of the skies and seas of the two great bays between Howth and Bray, with Dalkey Island in the middle.' And again: 'For brilliance of colour, making rocks raining pools and herbage look like terrestrial jewellery; I have seen nothing like the heights above Sligo Bay. And for magic that takes you out, far out, of this time and this world, there is Skellig Michael, ten miles off the Kerry coast, shooting straight up six hundred feet, sheer out of the Atlantic. Whoever has not stood in the graveyards at the summit of that cliff among those beehive dwellings and their beehive oratory does not know Ireland through and through. It is the beauty of Ireland that has made us what we are. I am a product of Dalkey's outlook.' It was there, in sight of those skies and those seas, that Shaw grew up; there that he swam and learnt to love the sea; and there, roaming after dark, that he wrestled with Shelley's Almighty Fiend and hurled him from his mind into the night air, returning home an atheist. His university, Shaw says, had three colleges: 'Lee's Musical Society, the National Gallery, and Dalkey Hill.' Whatever influenced Shaw most, from Dalkey Hill come those hints of earthy beauty that touch Shaw's work with an enchantment all too rare. As for instance in the scene

between Keegan and the grasshopper in John Bull's Other Island. And who would ever imagine any Shavian character posing—and in *The Apple Cart* of all plays—such a question as: 'Who can be dull with pools in the rocks to watch?' unless he knew about Shaw and Dalkey Hill and guessed the secrets between them?

Why, then, it may be asked, did Shaw brusquely turn his back on Ireland and on all her beauty that he loved so much? For several reasons. Most compelling perhaps was the fear that if he stayed that very beauty would sap rather than inspire him. This fear Larry Doyle voices in John Bull's Other Island, crying out with passionate vehemence: 'Oh, the dreaming! the dreaming! the torturing, heart-scalding, never satisfying dreaming, dreaming, dreaming, dreaming! [*Savagely*] No debauchery that ever coarsened and brutalized an Englishman can take the worth and usefulness out of him like that dreaming. An Irishman's imagination never lets him alone, never convinces him, never satisfies him; but it makes him that he can't face reality nor deal with it nor handle it nor conquer it. . . . If you want to interest him in Ireland you've got to call the unfortunate island Kathleen ni Hoolihan and pretend she's a little old woman. It saves thinking. It saves working. It saves everything except imagination, imagination, imagination; and imagination's such a torture that you can't bear it without whisky.' Shaw had yet his way to make in the world, and he knew instinctively that Kathleen ni Hoolihan could give him no lift on that way. She could only entice him along the meandering Irish road, ending him up, as likely as not, in a treacherous bog. He fled her blandishments.

Yet, though no longer living in Ireland, Shaw could have contributed to the Irish literary and theatrical renaissance of the next thirty years had he been interested. This movement, which received much of its first impetus from the publication of O'Grady's *History of Ireland* in 1880, found expression through such institutions as the Irish Literary Society, the Gaelic League, the Irish National Theatre Society, and finally in the Abbey Theatre which first opened its doors in 1904; and in such champions as

Douglas Hyde, 'A. E.,' W. B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, Miss Horniman, J. M. Synge, Lennox Robinson, and St. John Ervine. Indeed, who did not support the movement! Even George Moore, living in London and spiritually more at home in Paris than in either London or Dublin, was drawn into the net. Shaw alone among Irish men of letters—or alone but for the company of Oscar Wilde—remained aloof and unsympathetic.

Like Gallio, Shaw cared for none of these things. The burning interests of Yeats and his fellow enthusiasts left him cold. While they were reviving the Gaelic language, Shaw was content with any language that would scourge hypocrisy and expound economics, and more than content with a language the vehicle of Shakespeare, of Bunyan, and of King James's translators of the Bible. Yeats and his school stood for, and preached on, art for art's sake, a text and a tenet abhorred by Shaw. They were arty: Shaw was earthy. They were poetical: he, proudly prosaic. The realist in Shaw had little to say to the escapist in Yeats who, like a magician in fee to Kathleen ni Hoolihan, spread out his long arms from beneath his long black cloak to evoke romance from the mists of Ireland's dim past. To Shaw this was so much moonshine. If mist there must be, he infinitely preferred the realism of an honest London pea-soup fog.

Thus it came about that the Irish Theatre was born, grew up, and thrived without help from a contemporary Irishman fast becoming the most talked-of playwright in the world. His only offering, John Bull's Other Island, was declined by the Abbey Theatre as a hindrance rather than a help. Shaw himself admitted the play was 'uncongenial to the whole spirit of the neo-Gaelic movement,' which he brushed contemptuously aside as 'a quaint little offshoot of English Pre-Raphaelitism . . . using Nationalism as a stalking-horse.' Events, however, stultified Shaw's contempt. Nationalism proved no stalking-horse, but a favourite and a winner. Ireland soon became a sovereign state, and graced by her Gaelic name Eire. And she rewarded Yeats the impractical dreamer, for his share in this consummation, by making him a Senator.

For running away, Ireland bore Shaw no permanent ill-will: on the contrary, in the fullness of time she became proud of him. For a ninetieth birthday present Dublin gave him the honorary freedom of her city, its roll receiving the familiar Shavian signature on 28th August 1946.

Lastly before leaving Ireland, Shaw's attitude to animals may be fittingly considered here, since it is in youth that a man comes to terms with animals, or doesn't. Does Shaw detest, tolerate, or like them? Most people, I fear, would guess that he liked them only in theory and on paper. A guess so uncharitable (and wrong) would be due largely to the difficulty of picturing Shaw in contact with animals, so closely is he associated in the public mind with the platform and with that impregnable fortress of the shy, the study desk. As previously noted, Shaw respects animals; and for this live-and-let-live attitude, which precludes doting, it seems that animals like him. He was brought up with animals about the house, and a dog and a parrot provided him with the kind of education which he could understand and value. 'It amuses me,' he tells us, 'to talk to animals in a sort of jargon I have invented for them; and it seems to me that it amuses them to be talked to, and that they respond to the tone of the conversation, though its full intellectual content may to some extent escape them. Further, it gives me extraordinary gratification to find a wild bird treating me with confidence, as robins sometimes do.'

Aware of our kinship with animals, Shaw indeed feels that he possesses this sense in a greater degree than most people, and while he agrees that it may be necessary for a variety of reasons to kill, say, a rhinoceros, he would never agree that killing it for fun was one of them. When he was told as a child that the dog and the parrot were not creatures like himself, and that an impassable gulf was fixed between the animal creation and the human, he flatly refused to believe it. His nurse's proud tale of humanity giving itself airs and immortality at the expense of its dumb brothers who could not even answer back, convinced the boy of nothing except the desirability of escaping as soon as possible from the grasp of all nurses and religions that

not only told such whacking lies, but quite honestly believed them. Thus, apart from his Protestant upbringing, and apart from many other considerations, the Roman Catholic Church could never have claimed Bernard Shaw; for it declines to support the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals officially, on the ground that animals have no souls. Later, when the concept of Creative Evolution flashed before him and filled the niche which he had ruthlessly emptied and reserved for the Unknown God, his sense of kinship with the animal world only confirmed him in his vision, and crowned it. For, as he said years afterwards: 'This sense of kinship of all forms of life is all that is needed to make Evolution not only a conceivable theory, but an inspiring one. St. Anthony was ripe for the Evolution theory when he preached to the fishes, and St. Francis when he called the birds his little brothers.'

It may be not unfitting; then, to leave Ireland, that moist green land of purple heather and brown bogs, of sad evenings, whisky, dreaming, and disillusion, with the picture of the infant Shaw imbibing the first intimations of religion from the wisdom of a parrot and the friendliness of a dog.

CHAPTER IV

ENGLAND

BERNARD SHAW felt that Ireland was a good place to get out of. In London, however, his progress was not exactly triumphal: it was slower than a snail's. This was not surprising. What equipment, what weapons had he brought with him as he drove to his mother's in his four-wheeler on that spring day in 1876 and looked out with eager curiosity on London for the first time? Hardly those of a conquering hero.

Inwardly he was shy, outwardly he was aggressive, and socially he was all thumbs. Poor, he had neither influence nor prospects. The only profession for which he was qualified, a business one, was precisely the one from which he had just turned and fled. His heart and bent lay in the arts, and he wanted to be a painter. As an enthusiastic dilettante and amateur he knew his way about the world of books and music and pictures, but there was no money in that world. Besides, a lad whose chief qualification was that he had saturated himself in the Bible and Shakespeare before he was ten years old because he liked them would, if he were wise enough to know which side his bread was buttered, carefully withhold such damaging information from any prospective commercial employer by whom he might have the luck to be interviewed. Moreover, he was not even free: he had to fulfil the obligations of his station, which was that of gentleman, and keep his collar and cuffs clean and his person tidy. At this time Mrs. Shaw still strove to make both ends meet by giving singing lessons, and when she opened the front door to welcome Bernard, which she did with all a mother's love, her practical self can have seen little in the cheerful stripling except another mouth to be fed. Yet the son she embraced had brought imponderable treasures with him: a freedom from illusion; the power to face facts; sharpened wits; the sensitive pride of the imaginative man who is determined to fight his way

out of the shame of poverty and the servitude of drudgery; and also, his mother's food and shelter notwithstanding, self-reliance, for Bernard Shaw knew instinctively that none but Bernard Shaw could further the interests of this young, poor, timid fellow, since none but he knew what those interests were.

I include in Shaw's luggage the power to face reality. This power derives from the fact that, as Shaw himself once remarked to G. K. Chesterton, an Irishman has two eyes. For the power to face facts obviously depends on the ability to see facts, and by making this remark Shaw indicated one of the salient differences between the Irish and the English. I mean the difference in the ways of regarding the Romantic and the Real, or the Ideal and the Actual, or the sentiment and the fact giving rise to it. To the Englishman's eyes the Romantic and the Real are superimposed and concentric, and therefore identical; he views them as one and the same thing. But the Irishman keeps them separate. Your Irishman can perceive and appreciate the glamour of romance with as much feeling as your Englishman, but he does so with only one of his eyes, as it were; the other is busy staring at the hard kernel of prosaic facts around which the romance gathers and circles in a sort of aura. The Irishman never takes his eyes off the naked facts, while the Englishman likes to see them only through the aura. It is the Englishman's skill in the art of romantic idealization, for instance, that so happily transmutes the leaden necessities of commercial expansion into the silver opportunities for punitive expeditions, and finally into the golden glories of empire and government for the good of the natives; just as it unfortunately causes those with less skill in the art to call the English hypocrites. An Irishman, on the other hand, is a realist first and all the time. The Duke of Wellington and Bernard Shaw were being typically Irish, for example, when the one declared that his victorious troops were the scum of the earth, and the other filled his soldier's pouch with chocolate in place of ammunition. To the Irish even politics are real, and the English House of Commons was denuded of realists when the Irish left it. There is no wile they will not practise, no charm

or blarney they will not exert, to gain the ultimate object on which one eye is always relentlessly fixed. But the Englishman hears only the blarney; and, immediately flattered, he proceeds to romanticize the flatterer into the distressful, broguey hero of a hard-luck story that holds water only on the stage. Meanwhile the two-eyed Irishman plays the part expected of him for as long as it suits his purpose, and writes down the Englishman as a credulous fool.

If we bear in mind, then, that Bernard Shaw is always the Irishman and is English only by domicile, we shall understand better the nature of the two-eyed monster who, in 1876, came to this hospitable land to startle its long-suffering inhabitants.

For nearly three years Bernard Shaw remained outwardly quiescent, doing nothing notable, and for all we know doing it very well. Observant, inquisitive; curious, quick to reject and select, he probably got as much out of his enforced tours of London and its environs as richer young men of his age got from their grander tours down the Rhine or through the capitals of Europe, or from the yearly twenty-eight weeks of leisure that form part of a university education.

Bernard Shaw was twenty-three. If the world would not come to him, he must go to it, and in 1879 he obtained a post with the American Edison Telephone Company, or rather a cousin obtained it for him. At first his work took him into the East End of London. His job there was to knock on doors and persuade the people who opened them to allow their roofs to be invaded and fixed up as supports for telephone apparatus. The bold airs needed to do this sort of thing successfully had in Shaw's case to be simulated, of course; and although the rude impact between sensitive shyness and people whose experience had made them suspicious of all well-spoken callers helped to stiffen his backbone and thicken his skin, the whole idea of bearding strangers remained ridiculously and horribly painful to him. He was soon rescued from the streets, however, and transferred to the haven of the company's office in Queen Victoria Street, where he met Americans for the first time.

There his previous training, his painstaking neatness, thoroughness, and sense of method came into play, and the only strangers he had to meet were visitors come to marvel at the miracle of the telephone, and to these young Shaw enjoyed playing the showman. Before the end of 1879, however, the Edison Telephone Company was swallowed up by the Bell Telephone Company, and Shaw, taking care that it did not swallow him too, seized the occasion to escape from the mighty maw of business for ever.

And so, remarks Shaw, 'you must not suppose because I am a man of letters, that I never tried to earn an honest living. I began trying to commit that sin against my nature when I was fifteen, and persevered, from youthful timidity and diffidence, until I was twenty-three.'

He left the City not only without a stain on his character, but with a clear conscience and also a literary hope. For while helping to conduct the telephone business with one hand he had written his first novel with the other. It was called *Immaturity*. Unfortunately, no one would publish it. So he wrote another: with the same result. Then another, and another, and yet another; five novels in all, and not a penny earned; six years of dogged trying and unbroken failure. Familiar to him chiefly as five heavy brown-paper parcels, these offspring of Shaw's nonage must have taught him what a mother feels like when she is saddled with five unmarriageable daughters; for their upkeep and travelling expenses alone (sixpence every time one of them was packed off hopefully to the next prospective publisher) caused their parent considerable financial anxiety. Eventually the mice, more enterprising than the publishers, began to nibble at the fifty times rejected manuscripts; but they were unable to finish them.

It was not so much that the novels were unpromising, which certainly they were not, or jejune, which undeniably they were, as that they were just not wanted. True, they had plot, plenty of action, and style. Indeed, their style was so impeccable that it stood out and stared at you self-consciously, and a little self-righteously, as though to say: 'I may be stilted, but I know that I am correct.' The

characters showed a complete mastery over the rules of syntax and grammar, Latin as well as English, while those who were born in the purple, as the saying went, displayed a knowledge altogether below their station. But it was not on account of these faults that the books were left to the mice. The real stumbling-block lay elsewhere. Both matter and manner, though not perfect, were at least remediable; but the author's attitude towards the things he wrote about apparently was not. The aim of sensible commercial publishers being in the main to give the public what it wants, it was clear that the last thing the English public wanted was contempt or ridicule poured on its most cherished ideals and most romantic institutions. And these were precisely the things which Shaw, as a two-eyed foreigner and natural satirist, could not help doing once his pen touched paper. In short, to the publishing world, which was the only world that knew his name, Bernard Shaw was a Bad Bet. And so, more to atone for their virtues than their faults, the members of the bulky brown-paper quintet were condemned to wander perpetually, like lost souls in hell.

Their author could not afford to confess himself defeated. What would such a confession involve? A return to the City and an 'honest living.' Never! Deep down he believed in himself, and for the sake of self-respect and self-discipline, and to keep his hand in, he must stick to it, and go on writing, writing, writing. And hoping. Buying demy-sized paper, sixpennyworth at a time, he folded it into quarto, and forced himself to fill five pages a day, no more and no less, even if it meant finishing a day's work in the middle of a sentence. The precision and regularity of this self-imposed task did more than keep his literary gifts in trim; it taught him to write to order—a very different thing from teaching himself to write. In this way there issued from him, with clockwork regularity, *Immaturity* in 1879; *The Irrational Knot* in 1880; *Love Among the Artists* in 1881; *Cashel Byron's Profession* in 1882; and, in 1883, *An Unsocial Socialist*. Before he had finished the last, however, he discovered that, for the time being, he had no more to say. Accordingly, he stopped

writing until he should have learnt more about this world's people and problems at first hand.

Looking back on those five years, which somehow seem like an unconscious Five-Year Plan, what strikes one most, perhaps, is the dogged undaunted persistence, the painstaking thoroughness that pierces through them like a skewer of steel. This thoroughness is part and parcel of Shaw. Only two men in English history, Laud and Strafford; have earned the nickname Thorough; Shaw, if he wished, could lay an equal claim to it. And, like the archbishop and the earl, Shaw, too, I think, loses something by his thoroughness. We must blame the schoolmaster in him. The didactic and magisterial side of him finds it difficult to leave well alone, and insists on dotting every 'i' and crossing every 't,' as though he misdoubted his pupils' ability to read. Every one with experience of Bernard Shaw's plays knows that, as with Shakespeare, audiences listen better to fewer words rather than to many. Shavian passages pruned of their recurrent redundancies, but pruned so that their melody is not impaired, keep audiences awake: uncut; they are apt to send them to sleep, mentally, if not physically. It is a simple fact that an audience, having digested one point, is not only ready but impatient for the next one, as seals at feeding time are impatient for the fish to be thrown. The technique of all the arts is the process of selection and elimination. Mere luxuriance is not art: the jungle is luxuriant. Neither is mere prodigality art: nature is prodigal. The greater the artist the fewer the things he needs for his effects. It is so in every sphere; whether in art, war, industry, science, or sport, the greatness of results is to be judged by the economy of the means employed. To run over a beetle with a steam roller is a small achievement: but David's conquest of the Philistines with nothing but a stone and a sling was a great one. Economy of effort is the hall-mark of all really great achievement, as the writer of Genesis perceived. Judged by this criterion; Bernard Shaw falls short in the sphere of art: to which he would quickly retort that, in his works, art is a by-product and that what matters is what he says, not how he says it.

Let us return to his novels. They are still readable; and of how many books written in the eighties can this be said? Indeed, that not undiscerning American man of letters, Christopher Morley, went so far in 1905 as to call Shaw 'a great novelist gone wrong.' Be that as it may, it was Shaw's misfortune rather than fault that his novels, a generation or two ahead of their time, suffered from prematurity of outlook. They were like butterflies in the chrysalis stage, waiting, not dead but dormant. They needed only the warm sun of their author's subsequent fame to enable them to emerge from their brown-paper cocoons, one by one, and wing their various ways into publication.

Meanwhile poverty, always poverty. Genteel poverty, gnawing, humiliating, cramping. Poverty, Shabbiness, and Shyness, his three disgraces; would link arms and stand before him in the still watches of pessimism, and stare at him and challenge him to throw them off. Even his clothes, scrupulously cared for, were in a shocking state. In addition to broken boots, and cuffs whose raggedness had to be trimmed with scissors, he calls to mind a 'tall hat so limp with age that I had to wear it back-to-front to enable me to take it off without doubling up the brim.' Probably the best uniform for disguising shabbiness is evening dress, and Shaw thankfully availed himself of it. He has given us two pictures of himself, thus attired, prowling about London by night with empty pockets but feeling almost presentable and socially at ease. In one he is walking along Sloane Street when a down-and-out approaches him and says he has no money. 'Neither have I,' answers Shaw. In the other a prostitute accosts him at the corner of Bond Street and Piccadilly, and Shaw makes the mistake of not realizing that if he answers her politely she will be reluctant to leave him, with the result that they are half-way up Bond Street, pursuer and pursued, before he can persuade her that she has mistaken her man, which he finally does by taking out his purse, turning it upside down, and shaking it.

Had you seen a young man at supper time on a Sunday evening walking back and forth along the Chelsea Embankment, his incipient beard framing a miserable yet fiercely

determined expression, you might have thought it was someone steeling himself for suicide in the Thames; but it would have been only shy Bernard Shaw steeling himself to ring the bell of a house near by where he was bidden to supper.

What interests could he pursue, what places could he visit cost free? Well, there was politics, not parliamentary politics; but advanced politics. Indeed, the more advanced the better. In plunged Shaw, the complete Bolshie of the day when Socialism was the last word. It cost nothing. Indeed, he once cleared a few pounds by counting the returns at an election. Then, also admission free, there were the famous American evangelists, Moody and Sankey, to hear; and as an antidote, the famous free-thinker, Bradlaugh. And there was Bradlaugh's friend, Annie Besant, with her hand ever stretched out to help the impecunious and striving. With world thought in a ferment and such books as Darwin's *Origin of Species* as the yeast, there were many interesting things to discuss, and plenty of debating clubs to discuss them. Any alert, curious, iconoclastic, revolutionary mind, like Shaw's, can turn a metropolis into an Areopagus where, as of old, strangers spend their time 'in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.' As such Shaw treated London, having failed to prise it open as his oyster. For his *début* as a debater, which took place late in 1879, after he had finished *Immaturity*, he chose a little club called the Zetetical (which means seeking) Society, where he had previously met a young civil servant called Sidney Webb, and there he made what we can be sure was a thoroughly thought-out speech in what he confesses was a 'condition of heartbreaking nervousness.' Then there was the National Gallery, to be enjoyed free of charge on certain days of the week; and, further afield, the gardens and pictures of Hampton Court.

Above all; there was the British Museum. For years Bernard Shaw went there almost daily. If the world was his school, the British Museum was the study where he did most of his homework. There he charged himself with facts, like a human accumulator, storing them away in his verbal batteries for long years of use. The founda-

tion of Shaw's success in debate was laid in the British Museum; for his smiling cocksureness in argument is no bluff, but a cloak for a vast array of relevant facts. If he is courteous in debate it is because he can afford to be; and if he always has the last word it is because he always has a few more facts up his sleeve than his opponent. It was in the Museum's famous Reading Room that William Archer first saw him, not knowing at the time who he was. Archer was then dramatic critic on *The World*, a prominent weekly—that same William Archer who later achieved fame as the translator of Ibsen and, later still, scored a popular success with a melodrama called *The Green Goddess*, the material for which, incidentally, was revealed to him in a dream. Writing of 1885, Archer recalls Bernard Shaw in the Museum as 'a young man of tawny complexion and attire,' assiduous in his attendance and sitting with the same two books in front of him day after day, for weeks at a time. The two books were Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* (in French), and an orchestral score of *Tristan and Isolde*, both of which the young man studied, according to Archer, 'alternately, if not simultaneously.' Reading at the British Museum, however, though an excellent investment, pays no dividends at the time, and the fact that during his first nine years in London Bernard Shaw earned by his pen the sum of fifteen shillings (or £6 if we count £5 for a patent medicine advertisement and five shillings for verses written as a parody but taken seriously by the fellow lodger who commissioned them) should make budding authors pause; or, perhaps, do anything but pause.

The long lane of these nine years found a turning in 1885. In that year Bernard Shaw, approaching thirty, for the first time earned enough money to keep himself, his income for that year being £117 os. 3d., mostly for book reviewing for *The Pall Mall Gazette*.

In these nine fumbling years, from 1876 when Shaw first saw London through the eyes of Dickens (the novelist had been dead but six years) until 1885 when he landed his first regular literary job, certain landmarks stand out to guide us. Thus it was in 1881, after a course of Shelley, that Shaw turned vegetarian; and then, too, during a bout

of smallpox with its attendant shaving complications, that the famous beard of a fiery red began to grow. Clearly G. B. S. was beginning to take shape. But as yet the shape was as shadowy as the man was purposeless. Shaw was like a compass waiting to be magnetized.

The year 1882 provided the magnet. It came in the person of Henry George, whom Shaw heard at the Memorial Hall in Farringdon Street, with startling results. Entering the hall little more than an energetic nuisance and in conversation an irreverent joy, Shaw emerged, eagerly buying a sixpenny copy of George's *Progress and Poverty* on the way out, a changed man; an electrified man, a man duly magnetized to point now in a single direction—that of economics—for George had opened Shaw's eyes to the dominant part played by economics in the modern world. In an evening, and by a single speech, the nuisance was transformed into an at any rate integrated nuisance, purposeful as an arrow. So into economics Shaw plunged, his pent-up vigour suddenly released, until a friend advised him to go easy and read a book called *Capital* by a fellow called Karl Marx. Shaw did so. Again the results were startling. The book heated Shaw to a deep moral passion which has lasted his lifetime, and in the first light of which his path suddenly showed straight and clear. Having no other pressing engagements, he trod this path; and continued to tread it down the years. It was a path to the Left. Made a Socialist through hearing George, he was made a Communist through reading Marx, and was the more ferocious in his views for being an amateur theoretician in both roles.

In 1883 Karl Marx died.

In 1884 the Socialist Fabian Society was founded, and Shaw promptly joined it.

The year 1885, as this book's Shavian Annary reveals, is one of note in Shaw's life, and a turning-point. In it he got his first literary job worthy of the name. He was invited to join the Fabian Society's Executive Committee, a post he was to hold for twenty-six years. Domestically, he moved with his mother to the two top floors of 29 Fitzroy Square, W.1, to be his home for thirteen years until his marriage; and his father died, the consequent stoppage of the weekly

pound from Dublin no doubt helping Bernard to realize that he must at least try to contribute something to his own support, if not to his mother's. In this year, too, his career as a playwright starts—with the first draft of *Widowers' Houses*. Lastly, and perhaps most important of all, Shaw at last arrived at full manhood, thanks to the passionate advances of a married lady named Jenny Patterson, who took singing lessons from Shaw's mother and is described by Shaw; whose continence she broke at the surprisingly belated age of twenty-nine, as 'sexually insatiable.'

So ended the first nine years in England; of struggle in which the chief struggler was not Shaw but his mother. She, however, was never one to fret unduly or to worry. Had hers been an anxious nature, she would have lain awake wondering what would become of the ne'er-do-well son who apparently had nothing better to do than thump out the score of this new-fangled Wagner on her long-suffering piano. Well might Shaw's heart miss a beat in after years as he recollected how, as she confessed later, his piano-thumping and the fecklessness it implied drove her when she could bear it no longer to another part of the house where she would have a good cry. Since she was not given to feeling strongly about anyone or anything, the provocation to tears must have been great. On the other hand, two of her pupils independently assured me that Mrs. Shaw told them that her son was very good to her. Such evidence, however, is naturally suspect, for a mother is always likely to defend her son the more warmly the greater the rascalion he is and the more about him needing defence. The probable truth is that Shaw's natural kindness and characteristic thoughtfulness in many respects counterbalanced his selfish laziness and cold-blooded callousness in others. Anyhow, Mrs. Shaw survived. She died in 1913 at the ripe age of eighty-three.

No doubt it is tempting to exaggerate the tribulations of the past when describing them from the comfortable fireside of the present. But in youth small things really are big, simply because they seem so. They take on the enormous proportions of a nightmare which is not less real for being fantastic. Yet no one in his twenties is as young

as all that; Bernard Shaw was no child. Indeed, if any candid critic were to say straight out, that instead of throwing up a good steady job, frittering away his time in writing novels and articles which no one would publish, and then complaining of his self-wrought poverty, Shaw, by every normal standard of decent feeling and behaviour, ought to have been thoroughly ashamed of himself for taking advantage of his mother by sponging on her, we shall find Shaw himself the first to agree. And he agrees, not reluctantly or shamefacedly, but aggressively and even proudly. Discovering that an American writer was romanticizing him into a peasant boy who was the staff and comfort of his mother's declining years, Shaw obliterates the rosy picture with a vigorous counterblast from which the following fragments are extracted. 'I was an able-bodied and able-minded young man in the strength of my youth; and my family, then heavily embarrassed, needed my help urgently.' 'I did not throw myself into the struggle for life: I threw my mother into it.' 'People wondered at my heartlessness: one young and romantic lady had the courage to remonstrate openly and indignantly with me "for the which," as Pepys said of the shipwright's wife who refused his advances, "I did respect her."' Callous as Comus to moral babble, I steadily wrote my five pages a day and made a man of myself (at my mother's expense) instead of a slave. And I protest that I will not suffer James Huneker or any romanticist to pass me off as a peasant boy qualifying for a chapter in Smiles's *Self Help*, or a good son supporting a helpless mother, instead of a stupendously selfish artist leaning with the full weight of his hungry body on an energetic and capable woman.' 'My mother,' he concludes, 'worked for my living instead of preaching that it was my duty to work for hers: therefore take your hat off to her and blush.' That is the way Bernard Shaw is liable to attack any one who tries to defend him on conventional or romantic grounds. He is quite capable of defending himself on heretical grounds.

The above extracts are excellent examples of the tactics of a man who knows that the best method of defence is attack. An expert in carrying a war into the enemy's

camp and nailing his own pennon to a hostile lance, Shaw has practised the same tactics all his life. A striking illustration was in his fight with the censor of plays. That official, Shaw doughtily declared, was not only negatively guilty of refusing a licence for the Shavian religious tract called *The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet*, but positively guilty of granting licences for plays which were not only not religious, but habitually immoral in the subtlest, and therefore the most harmful, pornographic sense.

Before passing from his lean years, or rather his leanest, for Bernard Shaw's monetary success was only gradual, let us mark the supreme lesson which lack of money taught him. He realized then, and has never forgotten since, that without money a man cannot live, he can only exist. A man's first duty to himself and to society is to secure for himself an independent income, the fatter the better, as an essential condition of living as he should: that is, fully, adventurously, and splendidly.

CHAPTER V

CRITIC

ACUTE critical faculty is not easily smothered, particularly when its owner has kept it sharpened for nine long, unrewarded years. In what guise the talent first appears matters little for it will soon find its proper role. That it happened to be William Archer who got Bernard Shaw his first job in the art world, and that the job consisted in reviewing books for *The Pall Mall Gazette* and pictures for *The World*, is therefore of small importance. What is important, is that Shaw, for the first time in his life, was now in paid and congenial work of a regular kind. Archer, too busy translating Ibsen to review books, and considering himself insufficiently qualified to criticize pictures, had offered to load both tasks on to Shaw's unemployed and restless shoulders. The offer was accepted eagerly and confidently; for, thanks to the Dublin National Gallery, Shaw felt as much at home among pictures as among books.

In this way, under the editorship of Edmund Yates, who had made *The World* the most fashionable weekly paper in London, Shaw spent the next three years. Then, in 1888, 'Tay Pay' O'Connor suggested to his compatriot that he should leave *The World* to write political articles for *The Star*, of which O'Connor was both editor and founder. Feeling eminently qualified for this job too, Shaw accepted it readily. The invitation, in itself, indicates how his reputation was steadily increasing as a political revolutionary. Having swallowed Karl Marx hook, line, and sinker in the British Museum (fourteen years before Lenin), Shaw would bring him up on the least provocation wherever he was permitted to do so: in London, on platforms at debating clubs or in Hyde Park; and in the provinces, in any place to which he was invited and a third class return fare provided. He would accept no lecturer's fee; for, as he pointed out, a fee could carry restrictive conditions with it, and he preferred freedom of speech. In short, since his first nerve-racking experience

at the Zetetical Society he had progressed from Z to A as a political speaker of (theoretically) the most subversive type, and the red of his beard, now an accomplished achievement, did service for a tie of that colour.

The Star refused to print his articles. Very naturally, for the fellow not only seemed to know his subject, but succeeded in making it shockingly clear. The articles were too much of a good thing, and they were returned by a scandalized editor as being a hundred years in advance of their time. O'Connor nevertheless was loth to let go of his man, and to retain his services switched him over to The Star's musical department. And there, as musical critic with two columns a week at his disposal at the rate of a guinea a column, Bernard Shaw found his feet at last. One could say that he found them on the first rung of the proverbial ladder, were not all mention of ladders to be avoided in connection with Bernard Shaw, who strenuously denies that he ever climbed any ladder, and maintains that he 'achieved eminence by sheer gravitation'; a description that somehow always puts one in mind of a successful levitation at a séance.

He set about his columns, and his readers, with a will, putting his whole being, musical, critical, and journalistic, into the job. Like a new schoolmaster eager to try modern methods in an old school, his lessons were to be Without Tears. Choosing the Italian name for the basset horn which went out of fashion in Mozart's day—Corno di Bassetto—(without realizing the inappropriateness of allying himself with an almost extinct musical instrument that made the most funereal noises), he let fly with the invigorating sweep of a new broom. Musical criticism then being written for the most part in ponderous terms as dead as a dead language and to the layman almost as foreign, Corno determined above all else to make it readable, even to deaf people. Why write it else? To this end the teacher in him, and the preacher, and the propagandist, and the actor, and the orator, and half a dozen more of his personalities, all lent a hand. The result was a strikingly complete success. Corno's style, easy, simple, pugnacious yet persuasive, witty and, above all, clear, was greatly influenced

by, indeed directly derived from, the experience of Bernard Shaw the public speaker. The latter knew that a bored audience is a lost audience; that before an audience can be instructed it must be wooed and entertained; that it is not enough to make points quickly, clearly, accurately, and without ado, but that each point, if it is to be driven home to stay, must somehow be heightened and sharpened, now with wit, now with sarcasm, now with anecdote, now with exaggeration, now with under-emphasis. To make people want to read what you write you must first persuade them to listen to what you say. Already expert in cart and trumpet oratory, Shaw continued to practise its lively tricks in print as Corno di Bassetto, with the result that his musical criticisms (and for that matter nearly all his writings) read like topical speeches. Opening Bassetto's volume at random, I find this passage: 'As might have been suspected, a settled weariness of life, an utter perfunctoriness, an unfathomable inanity pervaded the very souls of "No. I." The tenor, originally, I have no doubt, a fine young man, but now cherubically adipose, was evidently counting the days until death should release him from the part of Wilder.' This, as one not without experience of public speaking, I recognize at once as first-class oratorical material. Not only is it eminently speakable, but it has all the humorous urbanity of a successful after-dinner speech. Even apart from its context, of which I am ignorant, the passage holds the attention in an entertaining way, and so predisposes the reader to be instructed.

Through buying the orchestral score of Lohengrin some years previously, Shaw had made the gigantic discovery of Wagner, then commonly considered a monster of cacophony, when he was considered at all, and Bassetto's columns were largely devoted to revealing the nature of his discovery to people whose first inclination was to stop their ears. No critic could make the public like Wagner; time alone could do that. But this persuasively pugnacious critic at least made people aware of the great German's existence and aims. After touring round England's opera houses and concert halls—the Crystal Palace included—Corno's



Corno di Bassetto, alias Bernard Shaw, aged 33

cry was the same as King George the Fifth's after that sailor had toured round his empire: Wake Up, England! What did it matter that Wagner was noisy? He was New. And therein lay one of his chief attractions for Bernard Shaw, whose attitude to any novelty is normally one of immediate welcome and enthusiastic inquiry. Be careful, he seems to say, there may be something in it; one never knows; so give it a chance. In Shaw, novelty found an ever-ready champion, and as such Shaw fought for Wagner's acceptance. Now that Wagner is safely installed in the musicians' House of Lords, as it were, his value as a novelty and a jolting force is lessened, and when the radio plays Lohengrin now, Corno di Bassetto that was switches it off. But in the eighties and nineties, in regard to music, his head was full of little else.

Bernard Shaw never tires of telling us that we get from his plays only what we bring to them; a truism, of course, which applies not only to his but to all plays. I remember when I saw Rutland Boughton's musical drama, *The Immortal Hour*, that I had to bring to it a plot of my own to suit what I saw, because I had no programme and, as usual in opera, I was unable to hear the words. It was a beautiful plot, and moved me vastly, so that when it reached what seemed to me a perfect tragic end, and the curtain fell, my eyes were full of tears. I reached for my hat and was half-way up the aisle before I noticed that the rest of the audience were still seated. Then I realized that they were waiting for another act, on which the curtain rose in due course. Evidently my plot was not the librettist's; but having enjoyed mine thoroughly, I did not spoil it by waiting to see the end of his. In the same way Shaw found in Wagner's works exactly what he put there; namely, a full load of Shavian social philosophy. Neatly extracting it from the composer like a conjurer or a surgeon, he put it into a volume called *The Perfect Wagnerite*, and passed it to the public. *The Perfect Shavian* would have been as true a title for this treatise on the New Music, just as his later volume on the New Drama, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, was a distillation of the quintessence of Shaw.

Two Shavian anecdotes belonging to this period must

find room here. In the first, Bernard Shaw is attending a fashionable London musicale at a private house in his professional capacity. Asked by his hostess what he thought of the new violinist whom she had launched that evening, Shaw, beaming, said that he reminded him of Paderewski. After a moment's hesitation the nonplussed lady pointed out that Paderewski was not a violinist. Shaw agreed. 'Just so, madam, just so!' On the other occasion a street musician was playing his instrument when Bassetto happened to come along. The itinerant held out his cap. 'Press!' said the critic, and passed on.

Both stories have the authentic Shavian ring. The first repartee reveals a new Shaw, one no longer ill at ease in society, discordant, crudely self-assertive, and an insufferable outsider, but one moving about freely on the inside, at ease and sure of his ground, politely armed with smile and rapier, and, even if experiencing shyness, confident that he can conceal it. The second, monosyllabic though it is, marks a small mine of Shavian information.

The wit of the man; its easy spontaneity; its callous brightness; the man's impulse to self-advertise; his scrupulous attention to money matters, in this case by avoiding payment; his hatred of poverty in all its forms, and his avoidance of all its concrete embodiments; his critical acumen, from which we may safely conclude that the street player was no musician, for had he shown but a spark of promise Shaw would have been the first to spot it, and to stop and make inquiries, the upshot of which might easily have been—such is Shaw's generosity to artists—a couple of years for the man at the Royal Academy of Music, with Shaw footing the bill. All these, I think, without stretching the imagination too far, can be read into the sparkle of that one word, 'Press!'

Bassetto reigned on *The Star* for two years, and made good. He had made his mark: that was all that mattered for the moment. He had escaped from the penury of his novel-writing days and, able to support himself, could look the world in the face, no man's slave. In fact, he was open to offers, and offers came. One came from Frank Harris, then editor of *The Saturday Review*, who proposed that

Shaw should join his staff as musical critic, this time under his own name. Shaw accepted the offer, thereby nearly trebling his salary from two guineas to six pounds a week. At the end of four years under Harris he found that he could no longer write on music without repeating himself, and was honest enough to say so. Harris accordingly transferred him to his paper's drama department; and there, as dramatic critic of *The Saturday Review*, he worked successfully until the spring of 1898. By that time he had become both utterly exhausted and a playwright of established and infamous reputation.

It would be untrue to say that Bernard Shaw was bored by the plays his new profession forced him to go and see; they exasperated and irritated him far too much to bore him. What kind of play graced or disgraced the London theatre in the nineties? Apart from Shakespeare, whom Irving tailored nightly at the Lyceum to fit his actor-management's stars, there was the fashionable play; and this dealt with but the one topic of Love, generally in the debased form of clandestine adultery. The love plot was standardized and mass-produced, and only its decorations, or twists as they were called, were varied by the dexterous craftsmanship of men like Arthur Wing Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones. The skill with which such eminent playwrights served up the same dish, and by garnishing it afresh passed it to a public that the box-office proved was always greedy for more, in Shaw's eyes only aggravated the offence: for it was the dish itself that made his gorge rise. Love? Ugh! Love is not Bernard Shaw's strong suit. He is no Latin.

It would be incorrect to say that Love was Shaw's blind spot, because he does see it; and it makes him see red. Love appears to him not so much a temptation as a nuisance. Consequently he rebels against it as a tyranny and a waste of time. He makes Sir Isaac Newton say: 'Women enter a philosopher's life only to disturb it. They expect too much attention.' He has never written a love play, or even a love scene or sentence, that is recognizable as such. He cannot; and even if he could I doubt whether he would. Where he finds Love glorified in the works of others, he

writes deliberately loveless counterparts of his own. Thus his *Caesar and Cleopatra*, in which the queen is nothing but the elderly conqueror's kitten, is his protest against the love plot of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*; *Man and Superman*, his protest against the popularity of profligates and libertines in legend and history; and *The Perfect Wagnerite*, his protest against the sublime sensuousness of *Tristan and Isolde*. Himself capable of such moral passions as righteous indignation and intellectual honesty, and of expressing them supremely well, Shaw seems incapable of expressing the passions of the senses in any of their forms, earthly or transcendent. In the plays the portrayal of these passions is intended, one supposes, when characters begin to call each other by such pet endearments as *Beedledumkins*, and their height reached when those characters become acutely conscious of each other as biological instruments of procreation, the moment of supreme ecstasy being easily recognized as that at which the Shavian lover likens his betrothed to a female spider. To Shaw, love is at best a biological necessity, and a harmless diversion: at worst an enemy that clouds the judgment and muddies the fountains of thought.

Finding this enemy enthroned in the theatre, he attacked it, calling upon the Puritans to rescue the playhouse from its toils and snares as they had rescued it once before from its profanities and salacities.

In calling upon the Puritans Shaw was calling upon himself. And here we approach the heart of the matter, for the critic in Bernard Shaw is puritan to the tips of his fastidious fingers. To the Puritan, life is not an experience to be enjoyed fruitfully, but a pilgrimage to be undertaken purposefully. The way is beset with ambushes and wiles, with Temptations and Giants; it lies through the Valley of the Shadow; and the purpose is to arrive at the end triumphant and unscathed, there to be mercifully released from the Great Burden one has carried. On that perilous journey pleasures will delay one; best avoid them, then. Spiritually the Puritan is a brave man, indeed the bravest, for he would see God face to face, unfearful of the brightness of His countenance. Nothing and nobody must intervene

between him and God; be it the perfume of incense, a Black Stone at Mecca, a village priest, a prayer book, or the Virgin Mary and all the Saints, all must be denounced and ruthlessly set aside or demolished as idols or as interlopers. The Puritan's quarrel with stained-glass windows and Gothic cathedrals is not that they are not beautiful, but that they are so beautiful that the eye is content to rest on them when it should be piercing beyond them along the strait and austere way. If a man is entranced by organ music, how can he hear the heavenly choirs? Thus the Puritan eschews pleasures for two reasons. They delay his journey, and they obscure his vision. Macaulay's famous remark that bear-baiting was hated because it gave, not pain to the bear but pleasure to the spectator, has its modern counterparts. Even Mr. Winston Churchill once delivered himself of a wholly puritanical observation, when in introducing a Budget to the House of Commons he declared that the desirability of a financial measure could be judged by its unpopularity. To the Puritan, in short, life is real, life is earnest: unpleasant, but exciting, and full of purpose and fight.

Bernard Shaw could sit for this picture without greatly distorting either himself or it. Bunyan is his favourite author, *The Pilgrim's Progress* his favourite book. He has sought God fearlessly and found Him face to face (his discovery that God is for him as yet only a half-blind, half-conscious Purpose, is by the way). For pleasures, as such, Bernard Shaw cares nothing. They are only agreeable tonics to brace him for better work. What is one to think of a man who, amid the sunshine and scenery and bougainvillias of Madeira, chooses to write an introduction to a treatise on prisons and punishment? Only that, apart from being bored by the social life of a smart hotel, he can never be happy except in harness. Indeed, is there not something of the masochist about the Puritan in Shaw? When he writes to Ellen Terry: 'Oh, Ellen, I am the world's packhorse, and it beats my lean ribs unmercifully,' there is a sort of satisfaction about the statement, almost a relish in the groan. Or when he writes from the Riviera: 'I was born to bite the north wind, not to soak in this luke-warm

Reckitt's blue purlieu of gamblers,' we sense not only a distrust of pleasure and a dismay at enjoyment, but almost a positive longing for the sting of pain. Careful, though! In these Freudian days of a little knowledge a little analysis goes a long way. If we are not on our guard we shall be calling Bernard Shaw a sadist too, simply because he has said that it annoys him to see people comfortable when they ought to be uncomfortable, and that he has to do something about it. Masochist and sadist! Well, aren't we all, after our fashion?

However that may be, there can be no doubt that Bernard Shaw possesses the high moral purpose that marks the true Puritan. Indeed, he may be said to possess very little else, for all his other possessions are made subservient to this one; except the sense of comic anticlimax, and this, being inherited, he possesses in spite of himself, for it is always getting in his way, and defeating his purpose. His plays are so consistently purposeful that when he occasionally writes one—*The Six of Calais*, for instance—with no particular moral purpose, its lack of message bewilders his critics and throws them into confusion.

Now if a man is intensely conscious of his purpose, and intensely determined to make his message heard, he will choose to deliver it on the radio or in the Albert Hall rather than in a place used exclusively for entertainment, such as a cabaret. But Bernard Shaw had no choice. The theatre was his job, his office, and his workshop, and he instinctively knew that it was there, within the theatre's then unhallowed precincts, that he had to deliver his message. Alas! The fashionable theatre was not unlike a cabaret, especially when judged by Puritan standards; for, strange to tell, people went to the theatre to be entertained, or amused, or moved, or thrilled; in short, to enjoy themselves, it being left to Shaw to persuade them to go in order to think. Nevertheless, Shaw was not displeased with the possibilities of his future pulpit, convinced as he was that 'fine art is the subtlest, the most seductive, the most effective instrument of moral propaganda in the world.' He also knew that the theatre's audience was vast, catholic, and of all classes. He was displeased only with the frivolous goings-on of the

people then in possession. In other words, what was chiefly wrong was that the theatre was only a theatre and not platform and pulpit as well.

Shaw therefore characteristically set about elevating the theatre—at least, on paper. He denied that the theatre was the exclusive preserve of well-bred actor-managers catering for well-fed audiences with sensuous plays written by well-paid playwrights. That merely pleasurable arrangement by no means attained the Shavian standard. If Bernard Shaw was to work in the theatre, then the theatre must be made, in his eyes at any rate, a place in which he could work as a social reformer and revolutionary philosopher. Only if it had a high moral purpose could the Puritan approach it. And so for him the theatre becomes ‘a factory of thought, a prompter of conscience, an elucidator of social conduct, an armoury against despair and dullness, and a temple of the Ascent of Man.’ In short, a serious affair. ‘I claimed for it,’ he continues, seating himself with naïve but conscious superbiety between Pontiffs and Greeks, ‘that it is as important as the Church was in the Middle Ages and much more important than the Church was in London in the years under review. A theatre to me is a place “where two or three are gathered together.” The apostolic succession from Eschylus to myself is as serious and as continuously inspired as that younger institution, the apostolic succession of the Christian Church.’

It was easy to carve noble names on the theatre’s outside, and to hang up a sign with Temple on it instead of Cabaret, but not so easy to evict the goddess of love who held court nightly on the stage within. The sight of that abandoned woman, sensuous, sentimental, fashionable and, worst of all, successful, rendered the stage in Shaw’s eyes more loathsome than the Augean stables. He would clean it out, smiting with his pitchfork any that got in his way. Thus, as a critic, Bernard Shaw was greatly prejudiced. This he not only admitted, but vigorously asserted, summarizing his views thus: ‘I have, I think, always been a Puritan in my attitude towards Art. I am as fond of fine music and handsome buildings as Milton was, or Cromwell, or Bunyan; but if I found that they were becoming

the instruments of a systematic idolatry of sensuousness, I would hold it good statesmanship to blow every cathedral in the world to pieces with dynamite, organ and all, without the least heed to the screams of theatre critics and cultured voluptuaries. And when I see that the nineteenth century has crowned the idolatry of Art with the deification of Love, so that every poet is supposed to have pierced to the holy of holies when he has announced that Love is Supreme, or the Enough, or the All, I feel that Art was safer in the hands of the most fanatical of Cromwell's major-generals than it will be if it ever gets into mine. The pleasures of the senses I can sympathize with and share; but the substitution of sensuous ecstasy for intellectual activity and honesty is the very devil.' But love is a force of nature, and though the pitchfork be Shaw's, *tamen usque recurret*. Moreover, the theatre has many stages, and on one or other of them there is room for every kind of play. Shaw, therefore, did not succeed in banishing the goddess of love from the theatre: he banished her only from his own plays. But by proving to her that in the theatre's firmament there were other stars, which, though colder, could be made to shine as brightly as herself, he at least made her look to her laurels.

Two other things cumbered the stage as Shaw pitchforked merrily away trying to clear it of emotion to make room for thought: Romance, and the 'well made' play of the Scribe or Sardou pattern. These plays simply are not true, the rational two-eyed Irishman declared, nor their characters real. The heroes are nothing but heroic, the villains nothing but villainous! Show me in life a villain without finer moments or a hero without his weak spot. If this is Romance, it is false, and I am out to kill it. Romance at least should be colourful, and where is the colour in a jigsaw puzzle in which some of the pieces have been dipped in a bucket of whitewash and the rest in a jar of lamp-black? Besides, I distrust Romance anyway; it's dangerous; people may mistake it for Reality, and believing it, swallow it whole. Do not mislead the people, for they are on a pilgrimage, nor tempt them from the narrow way of truth. Beware of this siren who, as the curtain falls and wedding bells ring, cries out, And They Lived Happily Ever After!

Do not believe her. I will take you behind the scenes for the good of your soul, and show you how impossible it is for that fatally romantic couple to live happily for six months, or even six weeks, let alone Ever After, under the existing marriage laws. I will show you, too, how that gallant soldier is an arrant coward at heart; how that benign old priest who brings such comfort to his village flock lost his faith in God long ago; how that great leader of men is really under his wife's thumb; and how that notorious sweater of labour, grown rich by grinding the faces of the poor, faints at the sight of blood and would not hurt a fly. In real life, I tell you, a human being is composed of many saints and many sinners, of many strengths and many weaknesses; but in the 'well made' play there are neither human beings nor any life at all, only puppets and mechanism; and, except as mechanism, a *diabolus ex machina* is no more interesting than a *deus ex machina*, the employment of either being inexcusable in the work of a playwright who knows his business, which is to persuade his audience that they are watching real things happening to real people. Such stuffed mechanism, all sawdust and wheels, Shaw nicknamed Sardoodledom.

In short, Bernard Shaw regarded the artificial 'well made' play, with its black-and-white population of puppets as Henry Ford is said to have regarded history books—as bunk.

Thus week by week his pen was directed against, not the stage's failures, but its darlingest successes, against the very rage and fashion of the day. But he was not merely destructive. He wanted to introduce the New Drama (in the nineties everything was New) of which Ibsen was the acknowledged pioneer and master. And what was the New Drama? Well, if we call the Old Drama society drama, the New we may call sociological drama. The trouble with the New Drama was that no one of any prominence on the London stage would look at it. It was not only new and therefore a risk, but in the nostrils of managers it positively stank. It smelt of drains; it dealt with syphilis; it unshuttered homes, revealing unconventional wives not only wishful but apparently capable of walking out on their husbands in the most home-wrecking and heretical way.

And because managers held their noses and averted their gaze from what seemed to them nothing but sociological treatises in dramatic form and execrable taste, Bernard Shaw, his head full of Ibsen, never let them alone for long. Pains-takingly he explained in his weekly cascade of brilliant talk how the New Drama was important because it dealt with life instead of art, because it presented real people facing urgent social problems, and, above all, because it came armed with a philosophy of life and impregnated with a purpose. Just as his musical horizon was filled with the rising sun of Wagner, so in the theatre his eye was focused on Ibsen's penetrating searchlight as it played on each human social institution in turn.

A drama with a purpose! That was why Ibsen appealed to Shaw. For if any one is to be classed by Bernard Shaw among the very great, he must have a purpose and a philosophy of life. An artist without these Shaw may admire or envy, but he will never render him full allegiance. Arguing from this standpoint, Shaw was able to drag into the arena no less a personage than Shakespeare. Because in the poet's works there is discoverable neither purpose nor philosophy, therefore, said Shaw, Shakespeare is less great than Ibsen. Thus he hoped to hoist Ibsen by pulling Shakespeare down.

In Shaw's hands Shakespeare functioned as a two-edged sword and fulfilled a double purpose. For by belittling Shakespeare Shaw belittled Irving's reign at the Lyceum, where the Elizabethan, or as much of him as Irving pleased to leave uncut, reigned gorgeous and supreme. And any move to discredit Irving professionally Shaw considered legitimate, because Irving, exercising immense influence as archbishop of the theatre in general, refused to admit the New Drama to his cathedral, the Lyceum. He refused to admit even its existence, except as a troublesome hornet buzzing on occasional Sunday nights at the Independent Theatre, or winging and stinging its revolting way round the provinces. So much the worse, then, for Irving, the Lyceum, and Shakespeare. If the purposeless and pessimistic Shakespeare was standing in the way of the purposeful and philosophic Ibsen, then Shakespeare was no good.

Shakespeare Must Go. In this way Shaw used Shakespeare as a stick with which to bastinado Irving.

In a fight one uses any weapons within reach, and after it these are normally laid aside. It is a little surprising therefore to find, now that the New Drama is old and Ibsen reposes quietly on a shelf, that Bernard Shaw still persists in his complaint that Shakespeare lacks moral purpose and fails to expound a philosophy of life. It is a curious complaint. To criticize a man whose fame rests wholly on richness of imagination and almost godlike felicity of utterance, for failing to propound a coherent philosophy for audiences bent on entertainment, is perhaps permissible; but it is irrelevant. One might as reasonably criticize a bird for not pushing roots into the earth like a tree, or give bad marks to a sunfish for not growing a wonderfully useful tail like a beaver's, or complain that Einstein's discoveries are somehow at fault because they are not stated in impassioned blank verse. Shakespeare differs from Ibsen in kind, as eggs differ from apples, and to criticize Shakespeare in terms of Ibsen is like trying to multiply three eggs by four apples—it cannot be done. If Shakespeare were asked what was the purpose behind his plays I doubt if he would understand the question. Pressed, he would probably answer that their main purpose was to attract a paying public large enough to enable him to buy property at Stratford-upon-Avon and so become a country gentleman; and their incidental purposes, to provide his colleagues at the Globe Theatre with good acting parts, and, for himself, to afford him, as a creative artist and professional playwright, the indescribable satisfaction of getting one play after another out of his system. What other purpose could a playwright harbour, pray?

These trumpeting of Bernard Shaw on the subject of Shakespeare are interesting none the less, because they reveal how deeply Shaw is imbued with sense of purpose. Purpose is not the core of his being, it is his being, and he regards himself as the instrument and embodiment of a Purpose greater than his own. It offends and shocks such a man that a great poet like Shakespeare should be possessed by no apparent purpose; and if you were to insist that the

very purposelessness of Shakespeare accounted in a measure for his tumbling, chaotic greatness, he could only pray heaven to have mercy on your soul.

Shaw's strictures on Shakespeare doubtless gave rise to the popular fiction that Shaw has laid claim to be greater than Shakespeare. He, of course, never did so; although he has only himself to blame—or congratulate—for the current belief that he did. What he said in effect was this: 'To me, the greatest men are those who have messages of hope for groping mankind, and the ability to deliver them. By this test Bunyan, say, and Ibsen, and Goethe, and Shelley, as well as Micah, and most of the other Hebrew Prophets, were greater men than Shakespeare, who was a poet-playwright with no message; or, for the discerning, one of pessimism, which is worse and more deadly than no message at all. Now come I. I, too, am a playwright: and I have a message. It is one of hope, and I have the ability to deliver it. Ladies and gentlemen, you may draw your own conclusions.' But that he excelled or could even be compared with Shakespeare on Shakespeare's own ground, he never said.

The ground common to both Shakespeare and Shaw is the English language. Shaw regards its riches simply as material to be used, for a purpose: but the purposeless Shakespeare adds to them, and makes life the richer. Phrases of Shakespeare's coining have passed by the score into the texture of the language and into the soul of the people, to live there immortal. But it is difficult to recall a single phrase of Shaw's that is even memorable, much less an addition to the treasury of language. In the realm of word-music Shakespeare remains supreme, native to the place, and Shaw approaches its multi-coloured splendours more as critic, a musical critic; than competitor.

CHAPTER VI

DRAMATIST

THERE WAS one way of converting satisfied Victorians to his views, and Bernard Shaw took it. He began to write plays himself.

For five years, and in England for a good many more, his plays fell on stony ground. Indeed, if he had not already made a name for himself as critic, musical and dramatic, revolutionary pamphleteer, and Socialist orator, it is doubtful whether his plays would have fared at first any better than his novels. The same affronting, veil-tearing, convention-ridiculing opinions which had marked his novels now marked his plays, and in polite society such opinions remained as unacceptable as ever. The fellow had forgotten nothing and learnt nothing, except to return to the fray better equipped and more suitably mounted.

In England the first really effective blow for the New Drama was struck with the 1889 production of Ibsen's play, *A Doll's House*, by Charles Charrington and Janet Achurch; the second, two years later, with the production of *Ghosts* by J. T. Grein's then nascent Independent Theatre. It was for this organization, the Left Theatre of its day, that in 1892 Shaw completed a play which he had started in collaboration with William Archer seven years before, and laid aside because he had used up the whole of Archer's plot in the first half of the first act. Digging it out and completing it, Shaw handed the play to Mr. Grein, who promptly produced it at the Royalty Theatre in Dean Street, which closed its doors in 1939. The play, called *Widowers' Houses*, dealt with the evils of slum landlordism. It was not a success; but it was a shock. Its Ibsenish author left the theatre with the laurels of notoriety adorning his mephistophelean brow, and woke up next morning to find himself infamous.

So the following year he tried again, hugely enjoying his diabolical reputation and fully realizing that even bad publicity is still publicity. This time, in 1893, the play was

about the New Woman, and he named it *The Philanderer*. Unfortunately it had to be shelved because the title role required the acting abilities of a Charles Wyndham, and these the slender resources of the Independent Theatre were unable to provide. Moreover, it was doubtful whether any fashionable West End star would have risked his reputation by appearing in a play by the author of *Widowers' Houses*, even if Grein had had unlimited financial backing: better appear in a nigger minstrel troupe than in Shaw. With nothing to lose and everything to gain, the undaunted author immediately wrote *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, a play about prostitution, Mrs. Warren being a purveyor of the trade. This was too much for the Lord Chamberlain, who stepped in and forbade Mrs. Warren the stage. It was also too much for Jack Grein. And also for Bernard Shaw, who, with the impasse created by the Censor, ceased to function as abortive playwright in ordinary to the Independent Theatre.

Whilst serving in that capacity, however, Shaw had proved two things: first, that he really could write plays; and second, that he could compete successfully with all comers in the choice of unsavoury subjects for his plots. Henrik Ibsen, as the saying goes, had nothing on Bernard Shaw.

Of all the names hurled at Bernard Shaw, and they are legion, probably the *Laughing Ibsen* is the one best suited to him as he was in the early nineties. Then, as always, he could inject laughter into everything he touched, even into such unpromising material as slums and prostitution. The recipe was a simple one. 'I found,' he says, 'that I had only to say with perfect simplicity what I seriously meant just as it struck me, to make everybody laugh. My method is to take the utmost trouble to find the right thing to say, and then say it with the utmost levity. And all the time the real joke is that I am in earnest.'

The Norwegian, of course, was already a translated and established novelty in London when the Irishman was aspiring to recognition as a playwright, and it was perhaps inevitable, however ridiculous, that the younger man should be accused of stealing his ideas from the older. Ridiculous, because

no one would try to disparage Lenin, for instance, by accusing him of 'stealing' his ideas from Marx. Because of his political inclinations, Lenin very naturally and properly took what Marx had to offer him, and bent it to his own purposes; and was a follower of Marx only in the sense that he was born later. Only in that sense was Shaw a follower of Ibsen.

The truth is, that towards the end of the nineteenth century the drama, no less than politics and religion, needed an infusion of new life, and the consciousness of this need produced various men in various places, Ibsen and Shaw and Chekov among them, for its practically simultaneous fulfilment. This consideration, however, did not prevent the charge of plagiarism from being levelled at Shaw. In one of the controversies fought out in the newspapers he was specifically charged with filching his ideas not only from Ibsen, but from Strindberg, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Tolstoy. Everybody who was anybody entered the arena for or against, and for a long time it seemed as if the only uninterested person was Shaw. At length he too made his contribution to the din. He rebuked the illiterate English theatre critics who, whenever they met with an unfamiliar idea, always assumed that it must have come from abroad, although it would have stared them in the face if they had ever heard of such men as Samuel Butler or Herbert Spencer, not to mention Shelley and Darwin, or had ever opened a contemporary English book of any importance. He asked those who contended solemnly that Nietzsche was the first man to point out that mere morality led nowhere, whether they had ever heard of Bunyan or come across his Badman. He then described the street he lived in, his neighbours, their habits, the sanitary accommodation for washerwomen, the vestry on which he sat, the men who made up its committee, and how their ideals prevented them from descending so low as to think about washerwomen at all, and concluded: 'If a dramatist living in a world like this has got to go to books for his ideas and inspiration he must be both blind and deaf. Most dramatists are.' And that ended that, in controversy Shaw being an adept at writing *Finis* with a final

flourish that really does finish off his opponents, at any rate for the moment.

Shaw still lived with his mother, but no longer on her. They had moved from Kensington, first to Fitzroy Street, then to Osnaburgh Street, and finally to Fitzroy Square in St. Pancras, of which unfashionable parish he became a vestryman in 1897. Natural energy, social curiosity, and a sense of public spirit thrust a West End dramatic critic into the grimy public life of north-west London, and it is safe to say that Shaw the dramatist drew his inspiration from the observations of Shaw the social reformer. Having myself helped to administer the 1916 Military Service Act in the same district, then a borough, with its miles of dingy streets straggling from Holborn through Islington to Chalk Farm, and having seen the undersized, underfed bodies of the majority of its male population stripped naked for medical examination, I can testify that in Shaw's search for objects for social reform his difficulty must have been, not in finding, but in avoiding them. No one who knows both Shaw and St. Pancras can be surprised, therefore, that his first play dealt with slums and landlords. To deal with anything else would have seemed almost a breach of trust.

Unpleasant plays, however, were getting Bernard Shaw nowhere. The Independent Theatre was not the theatre proper. As its name implied, it was independent of it. Shaw was after the citadel itself, held solid and officered by, not the advanced and impecunious Greins, but the comfortably successful Irvings, Alexanders, Forbes-Robertsons, Wyndhams, and Beerbohm Trees. So he began to write Pleasant plays instead. They fairly tumbled from his pen. In the three years beginning with 1894 there followed in quick succession, *Arms and the Man*; *Candida*; *The Man of Destiny*; *You Never Can Tell*; and *The Devil's Disciple*: their author recording the fact that he never experienced any difficulty in peopling his imagination with characters and setting them off talking to each other nineteen to the dozen.

Surprisingly, these plays fared little better than the Unpleasant ones. It was true that the usual Shavian vein of satire ran through all of them, and that London has always

avoided satire like the plague; but the obstinate ill luck which initially attended these plays was due, at least in part, to what can only be called the unfortunate personal influence of their author. Bernard Shaw seems to have been the worst possible vendor of his own wares; an inability shared by every one susceptible to 'author's disease.' This is a common malady. It induces in the patient the fond delusion that, having written a play, he or she is the person best qualified to know what to do with it. There could be no greater mistake. By the time a play is finished its author is far too close to it to be capable of judging it correctly. He knows it too well. If he can still delight in its good points, it is because he has become used to its bad ones. Now since no playwright in his senses writes plays to please only himself, but writes them to be produced and to please the public, it is not his but the public's approval that counts; and the accredited parties normally responsible to the author for adjusting his play so that it shall win that approval, are the agent, the producer, the manager, and the actor. But Shaw will have as little truck as possible with these highly skilled people. Always liable to author's disease, he has never employed an agent. In Sidney Howard's play, *The Silver Cord*, an energetic and capable woman brings up her children on the assumption that *Mother Knows Best*, with disastrous results to all concerned, and I can never manage to put her quite out of my mind when I think of Bernard Shaw's appearance in the commercial theatre market of the nineties, where he tried to sell his plays by reiterating to all prospective buyers that Shaw Knew Best. In other words, he had a well-deserved reputation in the theatre for being 'difficult.' And although old age has brought him a measure of wisdom in this respect (but he would call it an unwilling toleration due only to the sapping of his energies, and not wisdom), he can still, on occasion, make himself enough of a nuisance to prevent or hamper the production of his plays. Thus when *Candida* was produced in the West End in 1936 the responsible management and producer took the precaution of letting it be known that the author would be decidedly unwelcome at rehearsals.

In the films, too, it took Bernard Shaw some years to realize that his plays, however perfect for the stage, were unsuitable for the screen as they stood. Indeed, it is doubtful whether he would ever have realized this without the costly lesson of the first film of *Arms and the Man*, which, since he insisted that it should be made almost word for word as a replica of the play, turned out (as I, who was in it, know to my cost) a pronounced and dismal failure. Shaw, however, is no fool. The failure of this film taught him that just as a play requires a prompt-book so a film requires a shooting-script, and that the same literary technique will not serve the two mediums of stage and screen equally well. His lesson learnt, Shaw took pains to write two additional scenes for *Pygmalion's* filming, sixteen (of which only six were used) for *Major Barbara*, and three 'transition sequences' for *Caesar and Cleopatra*.

For broadcasting, too, stage plays should be adapted, the air being a medium as alien to them as the screen. But Shaw Knew Best; and declined to alter a comma of his plays for the radio. His refusal to learn this additional lesson was no doubt chiefly due to the failing energies of his advancing years. He was nearer ninety than eighty when his plays were broadcast with becoming frequency, and it saved him incalculable labour to leave them untouched, with an adamantine injunction to the B.B.C. to broadcast them precisely as written for the stage or not at all. That the results were popular and successful is not disputed. Of course they were, since Shaw's plays, far more than any others, depend for their effect on what is heard and not on what is seen. Indeed *The Doctor's Dilemma* was voted the year's most popular item in the whole of the B.B.C.'s Third Programme. My contention is simply that had its author, then in the last stages of author's disease, adapted it for its new medium it would have been more popular still.

By pointing to these symptoms of author's disease I must not be taken to imply that Bernard Shaw cannot be of the most practical and inspiring help to actors and producers if he chooses, or that he would not have been a brilliant director or producer of plays himself had he adopted that profession.

Indeed from 1904 to 1907 he did adopt it, producing no less than eleven of his plays for Barker and Vedrenne at the Court Theatre. Actors soon came to respect Shaw's judgment and ability as a practical back-stage man of the theatre. Thus Forbes-Robertson not only gladly accepted hints from him for his performance of Hamlet but asked him to produce Caesar and Cleopatra. Then, his privately printed *The Art of Rehearsal* is a gem of wisdom; and when occasionally he butted into a class at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and took it for a while, the lucky students found him neither frightening nor ridiculous, but sympathetic, inspiring, instructive, practical. And once, when showing Anne Grey, his film Raina, how to play one of her love scenes he played it with such exquisite femininity that Barry Jones, turning round as Bluntschli, was really startled and embarrassed to find himself face to face with a white beard in place of a lovely girl. Always, moreover, has Shaw stressed and striven to enhance the dignity of the actor's calling: more than any one else, he was responsible for victory in 1930 after the seven-year fight to get acting legally recognized as a fine art; players alone, he asserted, should take curtain calls; twice he refused the Presidency of the R.A.D.A. on the ground that only an actor or actress should occupy that position; on his eightieth birthday he gave £100 to the Actors' Benevolent Fund, declaring that as a dramatist he owed far more to actors than they would ever owe to him; and finally wrote *The R.A.D.A. Graduate's Keepsake and Counsellor* to keep the actor in dignity and countenance though the sky fell.

His dramatic criticism, too, is studded with pearls of actor's and producer's wisdom. 'In playing Shakespeare,' for instance, 'play *to* the lines, *through* the lines, *on* the lines, but never between the lines. There simply isn't time for it. You would not stick five bars' rest into a Beethoven symphony to pick up your drumsticks; and similarly you must not stop the Shakespeare orchestra for business. Nothing short of a procession or a fight should make anything so extraordinary as a silence in a Shakespeare performance.' And dramatic critics of a later generation he privately criticized for their habit of calling more

attention to the faults of plays and productions than to their virtues.

At the outset of his career as dramatist, however, Shaw hid the light of all such sympathy and co-operative feeling for the theatre and theatre folk under a bushel of wayward intransigence. At all events, what happened to his comedies in the nineties was this. *Arms and the Man* was produced, but it lost money, the takings averaging only £23 2s. 5d. per performance for eleven weeks. Candida, not a difficult play to place, or to act, had to wait three years, until 1897, before it saw the footlights, and then they were provincial and not West End ones. With regard to *The Man of Destiny* Shaw wrote to Ellen Terry begging, commanding, coaxing, urging her to persuade Irving to play its Napoleon, and when in due course Irving offered to buy the play, Shaw, for reasons best known to himself (for he elaborates them with such detail of self-justification in his letters to poor Ellen that none but she could bother to grasp them), took umbrage. The negotiations broke down. Shaw tried to reopen them by writing a clever letter to Irving. But Irving did not write clever letters; he wrote only business letters. The end is history: Irving did not play in *The Man of Destiny*, and the little play finally crept into the world by way of Croydon. Then, again, Captain Brassbound's Conversion was written specially for Ellen Terry, but when it was finally produced by the Stage Society, Ada Rehan having in the meantime regretfully refused the leading part, Ellen Terry was there, but in the audience. So the pitiable tale continues, with Shaw bungling away brilliantly, never in the wrong, of course, and always his own enemy. The climax came with *You Never Can Tell*. Deliberately designed to fit the fashionable stage, and with not enough satire in it to keep even the starchiest white shirt-front away from the stalls, this play had been accepted by Frederick Harrison and Cyril Maude for production at the Haymarket Theatre Royal. But after two weeks of floundering rehearsals, with the author in prowling attendance, the confused company broke up and, much to the management's relief, Bernard Shaw withdrew the play. After one of the earliest rehearsals he

had written to Ellen Terry: 'They think me a very harmless author so far. Wait until I begin silently and unobtrusively to get on their nerves a little.' This no doubt was written in a playful vein, but there is no smoke without fire.

The catastrophe at the Haymarket occurred in April 1897. It severed Bernard Shaw's connection with the theatre. In calling off *You Never Can Tell*, he in effect called off his troops after repeated attempts to storm the fort of the West End. Thenceforward he would employ other tactics. If the fort would not yield to frontal attacks he would try to capture it by a wide encircling movement; in other words, by publishing his plays. In the following year, accordingly, he availed himself of his literary skill to prepare for the reading public two volumes of his much-tried plays, making them formidable but entertaining affairs by reinforcing them, after the manner of Dryden, with prefatory essays in which he could blow off steam to his heart's content. As for the theatre, let it wait: he could bide his time. Actually, he had no alternative.

Shaw's experience as a novel writer had accustomed him to the disappointment of rejected manuscripts, and his early experience as a playwright only steeled him to an almost superhuman insensitiveness to praise and blame alike, until he eventually ceased to care greatly whether his plays were performed or not. However, his behaviour over his early plays, which at the time seemed so wantonly and foolishly despotic, was on the whole justified by subsequent events, when the whirligig of time brought the plays into general favour, particularly outside England.

Perhaps I have not been altogether fair. The reluctance of the theatre to open its doors to the Shavian drama was by no means wholly due to the truculence of its author, or to the too clever way in which he mishandled managers. It was largely the theatre's fault. The theatre then was so completely divorced from all contemporary thought, world movements, and outside interests, that when a writer appeared who was interested in nothing else it simply did not know what he was talking about. And when he proposed that the fresh air from this outside world should blow in great gusts on to a stage where the air was stale with the

grease-paint of posturing romantic heroes and of heroines bursting with passion and sawdust, the stage doorkeeper had strict orders to say Not at Home. The fear of mere change and the utter inability even to understand, let alone appreciate, anything new or fresh, were apparent from the first. Even the trivial *You Never Can Tell* was returned by George Alexander with a note to the author saying: 'When I got to the end, I had no more idea what you meant by it than a tom cat.' Actors were equally dense, equally bound by tradition. Two experienced members of the Haymarket company resigned from their parts in *You Never Can Tell* and when asked why, one of them threw up his hands and said: 'No laughs and no exits!'

As with Corno di Bassetto's musical criticism, Bernard Shaw's first care with his published plays was to make them readable, even by people who never set foot inside a theatre and were totally ignorant of its back-stage jargon. The plays were to be as easy to read as a novel. Thus, for example, the reader was not to be brusquely confronted with a string of characters, but gently and graphically introduced to them one by one as they entered the story. This accounts for the omission of the usual list of *Dramatis Personae* in Shaw's plays. But perhaps it is in his stage directions that the quality of readability is most noticeable. Always in those days, and even now in spite of Shaw's excellent example, playwrights were content to address themselves to the stage manager and scene shifters, and the reader, vainly struggling to create the illusion indispensable for a play, had to make what he could of such workmanlike statements as that So-and-So was 'Discovered, seated, C.' with a 'Door U.R.' and a 'Window D.L.' The lay reader may respect such remarks as the trade notes from one intelligent technician to another, but he will be paying respect where none is due. For it is a fact that not even the most expert professional play-reader can always be sure which is Left and which is Right, the playwright nine times out of ten failing to state whether he is writing from the audience's point of view or from the actor's. Probably the best plays are those written from the audience's viewpoint, for, since the audience is the play's ultimate judge,

the playwright who knows his job will take care to write his play from the same angle as that from which the audience is going to see it. Then what is called Stage Left becomes Right. Be that as it may, certainly the reader, if he visualizes himself anywhere in a theatre while he is reading a play, does so in a place facing the stage and not on it. The theatre has been well named the Cinderella of the Arts, and the confusion that still exists concerning this elementary matter of Right and Left shows that this Cinderella, lovable though she is and always will be, is too lazy and too wayward even to brush her own hearth and keep it tidy. But in Shaw's mind there was no confusion, and he took care that there should be none in his readers' minds either. Writing always from the spectator's viewpoint, in which Right is Right and Left is Left, Shaw's devices to banish confusion are both varied and arresting. It is many years since I first produced John Bull's Other Island, but I still remember its sparrow. Let me find the little fellow again in my bookshelves: he will show us how Bernard Shaw transforms the crude jargon of stage directions into literary delights. Here he is:

Great George Street, Westminster, is the address of Doyle and Broadbent, civil engineers. On the threshold one reads that the firm consists of Mr. Laurence Doyle and Mr. Thomas Broadbent, and that their rooms are on the first floor. Most of these rooms are private; for the partners, being bachelors and bosom friends, live there; and the door marked Private, next to the clerks' office, is their domestic sitting room as well as their reception room for clients. Let me describe it briefly from the point of view of a sparrow on the window sill. The outer door is in the opposite wall, close to the right hand corner. Between this door and the left hand corner is a hatstand and a table consisting of large drawing boards on trestles, with plans, rolls of tracing paper, mathematical instruments, and other draughtsman's accessories on it. In the left hand wall is a fireplace, and the door of an inner room between the fireplace and our observant sparrow. Against the right hand wall . . .

And so it continues for another thirty or forty lines, until the reader not only knows where he is, but can move about blindfold and feel thoroughly at home.

No other playwright, except perhaps Sir James Barrie,

exhibits such solicitude for his readers, and Barrie, I think, is too often inclined to begin a play as if it was a fairy story or a novel. Instead of remaining on the stage, pointing out This and introducing us to That, he is apt to invite us away from the scene altogether and to fly through the stage door, taking his characters with him. These flights are very pleasant, but they are not drama. Barrie's plays, however, had proved themselves stage successes, so that when he published them he could do what he liked to them and as far as possible free them from the limitations of the stage. Not so in Shaw's case, however, for few of his plays had been produced at all, while those that had been were unsuccessful. Shaw's task was therefore twofold: he had not only to make his plays readable, but also to persuade discerning managers and producers that they were eminently stageworthy in the practical sense. This he did, with his usual thoroughness, by describing all significant details of scene, furnishings, properties, business, movements, emphases, pauses, and all the other technical apparatus employed to bring a play to life on the stage, and with a consummate and unobtrusive literary skill. In short, he had to work with the mind of a stage carpenter as well as that of a philosopher. In preparing his plays for publication Shaw was evolving what was tantamount to a new art, certainly a new craft, and if there is any truth in that extraordinarily unsatisfactory definition about genius consisting of an infinite capacity for taking pains, then surely Bernard Shaw is the king of geniuses. He complained to Ellen Terry that the work involved was a 'stupendous job.' This was in 1897. If it contributed to his breakdown in health about that time his consolation must be that to-day it has become a truism to say that a producer, even if a dolt, cannot go wrong if he will follow the Shavian stage directions faithfully.

The severance between Bernard Shaw and the commercial theatre was complete—a severance never wholly remedied. A Shavian success in the West End is still a matter for surprise. Even the famous season at the Royal Court Theatre from 1904 to 1907, when Harley Granville-Barker acted as a link between Shaw and the commercial theatre in the person of J. E. Vedrenne, though it was all



*Gabriel Pascal and Leslie Howard with G. B. S. at the shooting of
the film of Shaw's play, Pygmalion*

that could be desired in the way of artistic furore, was a financial failure in the end.

Bernard Shaw never captured permanently the citadel he assaulted so ardently in the nineties. But he did awaken its occupants. And these good people, becoming used to the stranger at their gates, began to perceive the unique quality of the man, the queer strength behind his writing: in short, good parts for themselves. The result was that they consorted with the rebeard. He had only to appear outside the fort with a magnificent part, and one of the captains or generalissimos within would promptly open the gates. Whereupon Shaw would enter, thrice-welcome, like a grinning wolf with jaws dripping with satire and his mouth full of sermons, carefully planning to wear the sheep's clothing of all the most romantic and seductive theatrical stars in turn. Thus, as he records, if Forbes-Robertson had not been there to play it, he would not have written *Caesar and Cleopatra*; if Ellen Terry had never been born, Captain Brassbound would never have been converted; if Mrs. Patrick Campbell had not inspired him as far back as 1897 with the comedic possibilities of a 'rapscallionly flower girl'—an 'East end doña in an apron and three orange and red ostrich feathers'—he would not have written *Pygmalion*. This interplay between a creative artist and the human material that helps to inspire him is too complex and subconscious to be analysed profitably. It would be treating the whole process as too simple and conscious, therefore, to say that this or that play was specially written for this or that actor or actress, though this sometimes happened, *How He lied to Her Husband* being written for the American actor Arnold Daly, for instance, and *Great Catherine* for Gertrude Kingston. Yet it is safe to say that *The Devil's Disciple*, *Saint Joan*, and *The Apple Cart*, to mention only three more plays, would not have taken the exact shape they did if William Terriss, Sybil Thorndike, and Cedric Hardwicke respectively had not been available and in the author's mind when he wrote them.

The relations between Bernard Shaw and the artists who have appeared in his plays have always been in the long run conspicuously happy. From his long wooing of Ellen

Terry by letter, down to the minute care he once took to coach an actor who was due to impersonate him in a play, his attitude to actors, even though they may ruin his plays, is one of inborn sympathy; for he is a considerable actor himself. As long as Bernard Shaw is in the theatre things are never dull. The furies may be let loose, but they are always well-mannered. Sensitive himself, he assumes sensitiveness in others. Quick to wound, he is quicker to heal. The mischievous laughter wells up in the eyes, unrestrained by the quizzically frowning brows above them, until it explodes and Mrs. Pat sweeps down to the footlights, and retaliates by crying out: 'One day you will eat a raw steak, Bernard Shaw, and then God help us poor women!'

Plays are an excellent medium through which a writer may say his say on interesting or important matters, sociological and otherwise, even though he lacks the scholar's and the scientist's precision and patience. The dramatist is not expected to be authoritative, or a specialist, or to issue learned tomes. A play is not an exhaustive treatise, coldly accurate, but a work of art that hints and pleads. A completely accurate historical play, for instance, would not be a play so much as just another piece of history, and almost certainly a mighty dull one. All that would be accounted sins in a scientist and shortcomings in a scholar—special pleadings, highlights and emphases, omissions and inventions, red herrings and levity—all these may be virtues in a dramatist, whose aim is to move an audience emotionally rather than instruct it. Moreover, there are few things in his work a dramatist cannot seek to justify, if put to it, by pointing to the stage's limitations of time and space by which all dramatic writing is conditioned and bound. It was therefore lucky for Shaw, without the training or temperament of either scientist or scholar, but endowed with a plentiful wit and a will to express himself on weighty themes, that he found he could write plays better and more easily than he could do anything else. Very properly, he went on writing them.

Few of his manuscripts survive, because he commonly tore them up. The original of a play he would write in shorthand. This Blanche Patch would then decipher and

type. The typescript would then be sent to the printers, and when the proofs arrived and Shaw had revised them he would destroy the accompanying shorthand and typescript. The manuscripts of some of his earlier plays, however, written before this procedure became a routine, still exist. But they are scarcely recognizable as manuscripts, let alone valuable ones. Most consist of small elastic-banded pocket notebooks about six inches by four or even less, filled with the neatest imaginable shorthand, much corrected. The notebook habit dates from the period when, a peripatetic London bachelor, Shaw divided his energies chiefly between amateur politics and professional criticism and wrote plays in his spare time on, as he tells us, 'the tops of buses and in the train from Hatfield to King's Cross.' Such circumstances clearly demanded a desk not only portable but to fit his pocket; and the notebook, its scope enormously increased by Shaw's use of shorthand, was the answer. Last of his plays to be written in this way was *The Doctor's Dilemma*, for whose five acts four notebooks sufficed. Thereafter Edwardian actor-managers were deprived of the fascination of watching Shaw, as he read his plays to them, extract one notebook after another from this pocket and that, like a conjuror pulling rabbits out of hats.

In theme and length, the notebooks and the Shavian drama in general form a very mixed bag. If the bag can fairly be labelled Comedies, it is because the Comic Spirit presides over ninety-eight per cent of its contents (not over *A Glimpse of Reality* but even over *Heartbreak House*) irrespective of theme. Their author, inheriting a strong sense of the ludicrous and an obstinate optimist by nature, is constitutionally incapable of sustaining the tragic note long enough to write a tragedy. From his one attempt emerged not a tragedy but the insignificant dismissible tragedietta, *A Glimpse of Reality*. Sometimes surely the Comic Spirit must wonder at the incongruity of its partnership with the irrepressible Shaw. For the Comic Spirit, according to George Meredith, is not concerned either with or about 'men's future upon earth,' but is interested only in 'unsolicitous observation' of the human scene, the observation to be conducted without any 'fluttering eagerness.'

Of such renunciation Shaw of course is utterly incapable—Shaw the solicitous and eager; Shaw, interested in nothing so much as 'men's future upon earth'; Shaw, whose incessant jeremiad threatens no future upon earth or anywhere else for a species of creation that will not mend its ways and so must go to make room for something better.

In short, as a dramatist Shaw is a law unto himself. He does not obey the rules, and can only be consigned to a class of one consisting of himself. Plots he dismisses as 'clockwork mice,' and allows the ideas that assail him out of the blue to lead him whither they will. 'When I write a play,' he records, 'I do not foresee nor intend a page of it from one end to the other: the play writes itself. I may reason out every sentence until I have made it say exactly what it comes to me to say; but whence and how and why it comes to me, or why I persisted, through nine years of unrelieved market failure, in writing instead of in stock-broking or turf book-making or peddling, I do not know. You may say I had a talent that way. So I had; but that fact remains inexplicable.' The truth is that Shaw, primarily a preaching philosopher, is bound to the medium of drama and caught up in the theatre only by this unaccountable facility for writing dialogue and creating characters. James Agate refused Shaw's plays any place on the stage on the score that they did not belong there. This attitude seems to ignore a *fait accompli*: Shaw's plays manifestly are very much on the stage whether they belong there or not. Disputed may be his place; his plays may not be plays; we may go to the theatre to see them, or we may stay away: but there in the drama's nest he is, its cuckoo, elbowing, big, noisy, and at home, however much the other birds may sing and twitter.

the still waters in its depths, depths where the bubbles of wit that break in laughter on the blown and shining surface have no place and where I suspect, sorrow and loneliness keep company. After all, it ought not to surprise us that so bubbling a spring should have so sombre a source, for as Blake said, "Excess of sorrow laughs. Excess of joy weeps." And our modern psychologists agree with Blake. According to them it would be natural for a permanent melancholic to live in one long fit of laughter. However, it does not need an Adler or a Freud to tell us this. Punchinello was always a tragic figure behind the scenes or when the audience wasn't looking. We remember the story of Grimaldi, the great Italian clown. A certain man went to see a doctor because he was feeling depressed. The doctor examined him and finding him suffering from acute melancholia recommended him to go to the circus and see Grimaldi. He would cheer him up. The man smiled sadly and said, "But I am Grimaldi."

the actor can bite off both the comic and the tragic mask and reach the other side of good and evil.

In which Shaw does neither. It signifies him to be sentimentalized as a tragic figure.

Follow at his side at least carries his doctrine of melancholia.

Another poet and mystic, George Russell, speaks of Bernard Shaw's "suffering sensitive soul", and Shaw himself has said: "My heart knows only its own bitterness". We can hazard, then, that the laughter which Bernard Shaw evokes and joins in is little else than an armour or covering for his "suffering sensitive soul", a solvent for the "bitterness" so that the latter shall not eat too far into his heart. It is as though Shaw said: "Laughter what else can I do in a world so sad and bad? If I did not laugh I should weep, for if life were not comic it would be tragic indeed." It is not suggested that Shaw is sentimental in concealing hidden pain.

how of this much, I think.

Proof-reading The Real Bernard Shaw (1929 edition) Shaw refuses to be sentimentalized

20/7/1946

Aesthetic Science

Until quite lately, architecture, decorative painting, pottery, tapestry, costumes, were catalogued as art, and, as such, not on speaking terms with Science, which was concerned with mathematics, astronomy, all the clothes, and combined with therapeutics and hygiene, popularly represented by bottles, powders, plasters and inoculations prescribed by magicians called doctors. Politics occupied a very distinct third sphere, difficult to define, as politicians were assumed to be profound philosophers and economists with encyclopaedic knowledge without any stress being taken to ascertain whether they could read and write.

Aesthetic Science

The artists, scientists, and the politicians were as completely unassociated in the public imagination as if they were distinct species, as indeed to some extent they were. But their professions abled in each others specialities as amateurs. In this sort of pushing? Art was pre-eminently attractive. Prime ministers painted in oils, and Field Marshals in water colors. Many mathematicians were fiddlers, less skilful than Helfetz or even him, but none the less inseparable from their violins. But these were the recreations of the scientists, whose work was held to

A Shaw MS.

CHAPTER VII

THE PLAYS

A SURPRISING yield of information is to be won from even a cursory study of the catalogue of Shaw's plays accompanying this chapter. A mere glance reveals the plays falling naturally into groups that indicate the phases of Shaw's genius: when it shone, when it was clouded; when and for how long he walked the uplands, when the flats; when he truly created, when only preached or pamphleteered or kept in training for his craft. We can see, in short, when Shaw was inspired and when he merely jogged along.

At first it was all uphill. In the first ten plays—*Plays Unpleasant*, *Pleasant*, and *For Puritans*—Shaw was feeling his way: for eight years, that is, from *Widowers' Houses* in 1892 to *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* in 1900.

Then, with the turn of the century and in the prime of life at forty-five, he reaches high ground, sure-footed. The road is firm, the air bracing, the sun shining, and the prospect set fair. This delectable plateau stretches from 1901 to 1907. Its monuments, massive yet intricately carved and ornamented, are *Man and Superman*, *John Bull's Other Island*, *Major Barbara*, and *The Doctor's Dilemma*. Left behind are the thickets tangled with the excuses of artists who failed to play the parts Shaw had written for them: left behind, too, are the Censor's boards with *Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted* on them. Shaw now has a theatre, the Royal Court, and draws to it the most intellectually select audience in London. And he has a unique management in Barker and Vedrenne. No longer a critic, he depends on his plays; and although it would be a mistake to regard Shaw as now a playwright and nothing else, since that would be to neglect his tireless activities in politics and local government, none the less playwriting was now his only means of livelihood and his sole profession: the critic had challenged the playwright to stand on his own feet. From this combination of exhilarating circumstances resulted those four exhilarating plays, each peerless in its sphere. Together they form what might be called the Court

Group, or Plays Successful, the group's other plays (Bashville; How He Lied; Passion, Poison, and Petrification), though tossed off in a matter of days for business purposes or to oblige friends, being equally successful in their lesser spheres.

Shaw and the Court Theatre parted company in 1907. At this bend in the journey the road went steeply down and quickly reached the flats, where it lost itself in Boredom Bog. Gone, anyhow for the time; were the bracing upland air and the swinging step. The going now was heavy, and two years passed before the pilgrim had waded through the quagmire. In other words the period following Plays Successful stretched from 1908 to 1910 and included, besides the trifles or tomfooleries of Press Cuttings, Fascinating Foundlings, and Glimpses of Reality, the full boredom of Getting Married and Misalliance. This group can be called, not inaptly, Plays Tiresome. The first sustained Shavian effulgence had burnt itself out. Whether Shaw's inspiration failed because the Court went smash or, vice versa, the Court went smash because the inspiration failed, is doubtless as debatable as the ancient hen and egg conundrum: which came first? If I take the view, as I do, that Shaw's inspirational failure came first, and was the cause and not the result of the Court's financial failure, it is because I never forget the masterly diagnosis of the theatre's health once made by Alfred Lunt. There is never anything wrong with the theatre, he said, that a good script won't cure. Shaw failed to produce one. Nor did any play of this period add to his stature as a playwright, though as clown and tiresome fellow he grew several inches.

By 1911 he had left Boredom Bog behind, and was climbing sure-footedly again to high ground. The sun came out, though not with quite the same steady hot brilliance as before. Fanny, Androcles, and Pygmalion, with Overruled and Great Catherine thrown in for good measure, are none of them great plays nor even great Shavian plays, but they form a distinct upland continuing unbroken until 1913, with Androcles its highest point. It was on this upland, by the way, that Shaw finally conquered London's West End, with Pygmalion. Though not conscious of crowing, he must subconsciously have exulted in

victory after so long a siege. But the conquest over, Shaw put it behind him—with much the satisfaction of someone who had at last swatted a troublesome fly. Thereafter, far from catering for the West End, he disregarded it except to throw morsels to its music-halls much as a man might throw scraps of meat to a tamed beast. In his main labours he seemed determined from then on to write more and more what he pleased and how he pleased, with less and less regard to the requirements of the theatre and the pleasure of the public, especially the West End theatre and public. At all events *Pygmalion* is the last major play he wrote with a West End star fixedly in mind; and no later major play, with the one exception of *On the Rocks*, began its career on the West End stage of London. If we call this two-year group of five plays Middle Shaw, we shall at least be resisting the temptation to call it Middling Shaw.

Then, in 1914, came war. Forced by its circumstances into comparative idleness and silence, the playwright in Shaw took refuge in a house he conjured up by the wayside and called *Heartbreak*. There he sheltered for the duration of the storm; there, to keep his hand in, he turned out five more trifles or tomfooleries; and there he meditated, his eyes focused not on the horrors outside but on the mountain he saw mistily beyond them. The storm over, he girded his loins, threw *Heartbreak House* open to the public, and made straight for that mountain, which now we know as the five-peaked *Back to Methuselah*. The climb took two years. Then, barely pausing, and finding a new trail almost by accident, he ascended another mountain hard by, its shining peak the loftiest of all: *Saint Joan*. This group, covering *Heartbreak*; *Methuselah*, and *Joan*, constitutes unmistakably the Shavian Heights. On the last of them, *Mount Saint Joan*, sighted and climbed in 1923, Shaw rested for seven years, full of accomplishment.

After experiencing a kind of apotheosis during those seven years, in 1929 the pilgrim resumed his long journey. But for an ageing man of seventy-three, however hale, there were no more peaks to climb. What could he do and whither go, except clamber down from his summit and make for the westering sun by easy stages? For a decade,

from 1929 to 1939, he kept steadily and even jauntily on, though the days were drawing in and the best was behind. This period starts with *The Apple Cart*, and a right jaunty start it is, the work of a playwright refreshed and rested; and ends serenely with *In Good King Charles's Golden Days*. *Good King Charles* is a sunset piece. It lights up the whole Shavian sky with a last glow, not warm but rich, just as the sinking sun bathes clouds in sudden splendour and seems to swell into a final blaze as it sets.

There are nine plays in this group: *The Apple Cart*, *Too True*, *Village Wooing*, *On the Rocks*, *The Simpleton*, *The Six*, *The Millionairess*, *Geneva*, and *Good King Charles*. We may call the group *Late Shaw*, though only the virtues of *The Apple Cart* and *Good King Charles* will deter the dyspeptic or unfriendly critic from calling it *Unnecessary Shaw*. In the group's seven other plays the voice of the preacher is heard too often, and it is heard too often repeating what it has said before and better. The preacher's breathing is frequently laboured, and there is a tendency to talk for talk's sake and not for drama's sake. Indeed the critic wonders whether he cannot find here enough for a second volume of *Plays Tiresome*. He cannot, but it is a near thing. These seven may be decently interred beneath a plain tombstone with WRITTEN BY BERNARD SHAW their unadorned epitaph. R.I.P. Few will wish to disturb them.

Then at length, after a pause of seven years came *Buoyant Billions*; but not, even then, journey's end.

To summarize in simile, the plays of Shaw's thirties may be likened to a springtime in which at least one of them felt the nip of frost; those of his forties to high summer; of his fifties to the dog-days when his genius would have idled but was prodded to work by its plodding master; of his sixties to an Indian summer of phenomenal warmth and duration; of his seventies to an autumn now bright and fine, now foggy, with the sap running down and the leaves falling. For the rest, a December day when the sun surprisingly shines—and is then obscured.

The catalogue lists fifty-eight items. Not all are strictly plays. But all are dramatic compositions; and four, the *Playhouse Interlude*, the untitled duologue between Jesus

and Pilate, and two pieces concerned with the British Throne, are included to complete the record. Shaw's plays vary so tremendously in length and subject, from the gigantic Methuselah to the microscopic Foundling, that in so heterogeneous a catalogue these four are not misplaced.

If they like, statistically-minded admirers can claim for Shaw fifty-eight plays. They can count as plays the four pieces named above. Why not? And they can count Back to Methuselah as five on the prosaic ground, if on no other, that when Shaw submitted it to the Lord Chamberlain's reader as one play, he was charged the reading fee for five. Besides, if Shakespeare is credited with three plays for the three parts of Henry VI and two for the two parts of Henry IV, as is the custom, Shaw should be allowed to score five for his pentalogy.

It would be altogether unfair, however, to match Shaw's score of fifty-eight against Shakespeare's thirty-seven. Shakespeare's plays are all full-length full-dress affairs: no snippets or curtain-raisers for him. And when Shakespeare writes a *pièce d'occasion*, it is no one-acter but The Merry Wives of Windsor. Shaw's score, on the other hand, is eked out not only by the four freaks mentioned but by a translation (Jitta), a variation (Cymbeline), and no less than eighteen plays which fall well short of the 'two hours' traffic of our stage.' Omitting all of these, Shaw is left with thirty-four plays of orthodox length. But (to pursue the matter to its niceties) Shaw having been disallowed Cymbeline because he only touched it up, Shakespeare, believed to have only touched up the three parts of Henry VI, must in fairness forfeit three. Computed so, the score curiously enough works out even—a tie—with thirty-four full dress plays apiece. As though it mattered!

For the rest, the catalogue in the main explains itself. So do these chapters which deal with its fifty-eight items. A few words on four minor matters, however, will help to clarify catalogue and chapters alike.

(1) Throughout I have omitted the subtitles of such plays as have them. I have done so because Shaw is inconsistent in their bestowal. A play can hardly have two

subtitles: yet in one place he subtitles *Getting Married* 'A Comedy' and in another 'A Disquisitory Play.' Again, *Blanco Posnet* is now 'A Melodrama' and now 'A Sermon in Crude Melodrama.' Such haphazard indecision—or is it revision?—is surprising in Shaw and makes concise tabulation difficult if not impossible. Moreover, not all the plays possess subtitles. And some are subtitled flatly: *Widowers' Houses*, for instance, is described needlessly and simply as 'A Play.' Some of the subtitles, on the other hand, are worth noting for the ingenious way they seek to disarm criticism. Thus *Good King Charles* is subtitled 'A True History That Never Happened,' and the all too true subtitle of *Too True to be Good* is, 'A Collection of Stage Sermons by a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.' It is worth noting, too, that Shaw calls only one play 'A Tragedy': *The Doctor's Dilemma*. It is almost certainly the most hilarious tragedy in any language.

Two plays carry alternative titles (as distinct from subtitles), and these are given in the chapters though, from considerations of space, not in the catalogue. They are *The Admirable Bashville*: or, *Constancy Unrewarded*; and *Passion, Poison, and Petrification*: or, *The Fatal Gazogene*.

Shaw's early habit of devising titles for the published volumes of his plays did not survive *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant*, and *Three Plays for Puritans*, which between them cover his first ten plays.

Lastly, its author never seems to have quite determined whether number 56 in our catalogue should be entitled *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* or merely *Good King Charles*.

(II) Very occasionally, in view of their circumstances, copyright performances were of some interest to theatrical history. Shaw's *Cleopatra*, for instance, was actually played 'for the first time on any stage' by Mrs. Patrick Campbell, the occasion being a performance to copyright *Caesar and Cleopatra*, at the Theatre Royal, Newcastle-on-Tyne, on 18th March 1899. But ninety-nine copyright performances out of a hundred were of no interest, and I have disregarded them entirely. As well record the first rehearsals of the plays.

(III) Tabulations, like figures, hold dangers for the unwary,

and from them, as from figures, one can prove almost anything. The danger of my tabulation is that it shows nearly all Shaw's earlier plays to have received their first world productions in London, and so may suggest that in the matter of his treatment there Shaw really had nothing to grumble about. It should be borne in mind, however, that both the Independent Theatre Society and the Stage Society (which, according to the catalogue, account between them for seven Shaw 'world premières' before 1906) were semi-private bodies that gave only two performances of any play, generally on a Sunday evening with a *matinée* the following day.

The catalogue also shows that until the Malvern Festivals began, New York rather than London was responsible for the first production of Shaw's later plays. How greatly they benefited by the change! Like the Stage Society, the New York Theatre Guild is based on a public subscribing for plays of quality. But there the resemblance ends, for to Shaw's plays the Guild accorded commercial productions quite beyond the scope of London's coterie theatre societies, and commercial runs that its subscribers alone kept going for from six to eight weeks. True, Shaw by then had come into his own and was, as the phrase is, box-office. But this only brings greater honour to Arnold Daly (whose name occurs so often in the catalogue's earlier half) for taking a chance with the unknown Shaw, risking his all on the early plays, and producing them without subscribers on the commercial basis of sink or swim.

(iv) The Shavian quotations following each play's initial factual history are from Shaw's prefaces, and nearly always from the relevant preface, except where otherwise stated.

At risk perhaps of seeming pedantic I have been at some pains to make both the catalogue and the notes introducing each play as exact as extant records allow. In such matters, accuracy is all. I have tried to fashion a miniature but unshakable work of reference. If I have succeeded, it will certainly fill a void, and I hope it may also supply a want. In brief, the catalogue and its addenda are a work of reference or they are nothing.

On, then, to the fifty-eight, one by one.

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NO.	ORDER OF COMPOSITION	WRITTEN	NO.	ORDER OF COMPOSITION	WRITTEN
1	Widowers' Houses	1885&1892	33	The Inca of Perusalem	1916
2	The Philanderer	1893	34	Augustus does his Bit	1916
3	Mrs. Warren's Profession	1893-1894	35	Annajanska, the Bolshevik Empress	1917
4	Arms and the Man	1894	36	Heartbreak House	1913-1919
5	Candida	1894-1895	37	Back to Methuselah (In the Beginning)	1918-1920
6	The Man of Destiny	1895	38	" " (The Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas)	1918-1920
7	You Never Can Tell	1895-1896	39	" " (The Thing Happens)	1918-1920
8	The Devil's Disciple	1896-1897	40	" " (Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman)	1918-1920
9	Caesar and Cleopatra	1898	41	" " (As Far as Thought Can reach)	1918-1920
10	Captain Brassbound's Conversion	1899-1900	42	Jitta's Atonement	1922
11	The Admirable Bashville	1901	43	Saint Joan	1923
12	Man and Superman	1901-1903	44	The Apple Cart	1929
13	John Bull's Other Island	1904	45	The King and the Doctors	1929
14	How He lied to Her Husband	1904	46	Too True to be Good	1931
15	Major Barbara	1905	47	Village Wooing	1933
16	Passion, Poison, and Petrifaction	1905	48	On the Rocks	1933
17	The Doctor's Dilemma	1906	49	<i>An untitled duologue</i>	1933
18	Interlude at the Playhouse	1907	50	The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles	1934
19	Getting Married	1908	51	The Six of Calais	1934
20	The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet	1909	52	The Millionairess	1935
21	Press Cuttings	1909	53	The King, the Constitution, and the Lady	1936
22	The Fascinating Foundling	1909	54	Cymbeline Refinished	1937
23	A Glimpse of Reality	1909	55	Geneva	1938
24	Misalliance	1909-1910	56	In Good King Charles's Golden Days	1939
25	The Dark Lady of the Sonnets	1910	57	Buoyant Billions	1946-1948
26	Fanny's First Play	1911	58	x	1948
27	Androcles and the Lion	1912			
28	Overruled	1912			
29	Pygmalion	1912-1913			
30	Great Catherine	1913			
31	The Music Cure	1913			
32	O'Flaherty, V.C.	1916			

Chart of Bernard Shaw's Plays and other Dramatic Writings in

KEY. T.=Theatre. L.=London. N.Y.=New York. (A)=Amateur.

(C)=Act III first played by Robert Loraine at Royal Court

NO.	FIRST WORLD PRODUCTION			FIRST ENGLISH
	BY	AT	ON	BY
1	Independent T.	Royalty T., L.	9.12.1892	See W
2	New Stage Club	Cripplegate Institute, L.	20.2.1905	See W
	Vedrenne & Barker	Royal Court T., L.	5.2.1907	
3	Stage Society	New Lyric Club, L.	5.1.1902	See W
				(B) Charles Macdona
4	Florence Farr	Avenue T., L.	21.4.1894	See W
5	Independent T.	T. Royal, South Shields, Durham	30.3.1895	Stage Society
6	Murray Carson	Grand T., Croydon	1.7.1897	<i>Sunday Special</i>
7	Stage Society	Royalty T., L.	26.11.1899	See W
8	Richard Mansfield	Harmanus Bleeker Hall, Albany, N.Y.	1.10.1897	Murray Carson
9	(A) Anna Morgan	Fine Arts Building, Chicago	1.5.1901	J. Forbes-Robertson
	J. Forbes-Robertson	New Amsterdam T., N.Y.	29.10.1906	J. Forbes-Robertson
10	Stage Society	Strand T., L.	16.12.1900	See W
11	Stage Society	Imperial T., L.	7.6.1903	See W
12	(C) Stage Society	Royal Court T., L.	21.5.1905	See W
13	Vedrenne & Barker	Royal Court T., L.	1.11.1904	See W
14	Arnold Daly	Berkeley Lyceum T., N.Y.	26.9.1904	Vedrenne & Barker
15	Vedrenne & Barker	Royal Court T., L.	28.11.1905	See W
16	Cyril Maude	Regent's Park, L.	14.7.1905	See W
17	Vedrenne & Barker	Royal Court T., L.	20.11.1906	See W
18	Cyril Maude	Playhouse, L.	28.1.1907	See W
19	Vedrenne & Barker	T. Royal, Haymarket, L.	12.5.1908	See W
20	Lady Gregory & W. B. Yeats	Abbey T., Dublin	25.8.1909	Lady Gregory, W. B. Yeats & Stage Soc.
21	Civic and Dramatic Guild	Royal Court T., L.	9.7.1909	See W

order of Composition with details of their Original Productions on the Stage

First professional production is also given. (B) First production licensed by English Censor.
T., L., 4 June 1907. W=First world production.

& LONDON PRODUCTIONS			FIRST AMERICAN & NEW YORK PRODUCTIONS		
NO.	AT	ON	BY	AT	ON
1			Sam & Lee Shubert	Herald Sq. T., N.Y.	7.3.1907
2			Winthrop Ames	Little T., N.Y.	27.12.1913
3			Arnold Daly	Hyperion T., New Haven, Conn.	27.10.1905
	Strand T., L.	3.3.1926	Arnold Daly	Garrick T., N.Y.	30.10.1905
4			Richard Mansfield	Herald Sq. T., N.Y.	17.9.1894
5	Strand T., L.	12.7.1900	(A) Anna Morgan	Fine Arts Bldg., Chi.	14.1899
			Arnold Daly	Princess T., N.Y.	8.12.1903
6	Comedy T., L.	29.3.1901	(A) Sargent's Acad.	Empire T., N.Y.	16.2.1899
			Arnold Daly	Vaudeville T., N.Y.	11.2.1904
7			(A) Musical College	Musical Coll., Chi.	24.2.1903
			Arnold Daly	Garrick T., N.Y.	9.1.1905
8	Prince of Wales T., Kennington	26.9.1899	See W		
			Richard Mansfield	5th Avenue T., N.Y.	4.10.1897
9	Grand T., Leeds	16.9.1907	See W		
	Savoy T., L.	25.11.1907			
10			Charles Frohman	Empire T., N.Y.	28.1.1907
11			Little T.	Little T., Phil., Penn.	8.2.1915
12			Robert Loraine	Hudson T., N.Y.	5.9.1905
13			Arnold Daly	Garrick T., N.Y.	10.10.1905
14	Royal Court T., L.	28.2.1905	See W		
15			Grace George	Playhouse, N.Y.	9.12.1915
16			(A) University of California	University Little T., Berkeley, Cal.	19.3.1937
17			H. Granville-Barker	Wallack's T., N.Y.	26.3.1915
18			None		
19			William Faversham	Booth T., N.Y.	6.11.1916
20	Aldwych T., L.	5.12.1909	Lady Gregory & W. B. Yeats	Plymouth T., Boston, Mass.	5.10.1911
			Lady Gregory & W. B. Yeats	Maxine Elliott T., N.Y.	23.11.1911
21			Boston Toy T.	Toy T., Boston, Mass.	1.1.1912

Chart of Bernard Shaw's Plays and other Dramatic Writings in

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NO.	FIRST WORLD PRODUCTION			FIRST ENGLISH
	BY	AT	ON	BY
22	(A) Princess Bibesco Arts T. Club	Privately for charity Arts T., L.	28.1.1928	See W
23	Glasgow Clarion Players	Fellowship Hall, Glasgow	8.10.1927	Arts T. Club
24	Charles Frohman	Duke of York's T., L.	23.2.1910	See W
25	Nat. T. Committee	T. Royal, Haymarket, L.	24.11.1910	See W
26	Lillah McCarthy	Little T., L.	19.4.1911	See W
27	Kleines Theater	Kleines T., Berlin	25.11.1912	H. Granville-Barker
28	Charles Frohman	Duke of York's T., L.	14.10.1912	See W
29	Hofburg Theater	Hofburg T., Vienna	16.10.1913	Herbert Tree
30	Norman McKinnel	Vaudeville T., L.	18.11.1913	See W
31	Kenelm Foss	Little T., L.	28.1.1914	See W
32	(A) A British Army Unit	Trazegnies, Belgium	17.2.1917	Stage Society
	Stage Society	Lyric T., Hammersmith	20.12.1920	
33	Barry Jackson	Repertory T., Birmingham	7.10.1916	See W Pioneer Players
34	Stage Society	Royal Court T., L.	21.1.1917	See W
35	Lillah McCarthy	Coliseum, L.	21.1.1918	See W
36	N.Y. T. Guild	Garrick T., N.Y.	10.11.1920	James B. Fagan
37	N.Y. T. Guild	Garrick T., N.Y.		Barry Jackson Barry Jackson
38	N.Y. T. Guild	Garrick T., N.Y.		Barry Jackson Barry Jackson
39	N.Y. T. Guild	Garrick T., N.Y.	Beginning 27.2.1922	Barry Jackson Barry Jackson
40	N.Y. T. Guild	Garrick T., N.Y.		Barry Jackson Barry Jackson
41	N.Y. T. Guild	Garrick T., N.Y.		Barry Jackson Barry Jackson

order of Composition with details of their Original Productions on the Stage

First professional production is also given. (B) First production licensed by English Censor.
T., L., 4 June 1907. W=First world production.

& LONDON PRODUCTIONS			FIRST AMERICAN & NEW YORK PRODUCTIONS		
C	AT	ON	BY	AT	ON
22			None		
23	Arts T., L.	20.11.1927	None		
24			William Faversham	Broadhurst T., N.Y.	27.9.1917
25			Duluth Little T.	Little T., Duluth, Minn.	17.11.1914
26			Sam & Lee Shubert	Comedy T., N.Y.	16.9.1912
27	St. James T., L.	1.9.1913	H. Granville-Barker	Wallack's T., N.Y.	27.1.1915
28			Boston Toy T.	Toy T., Boston, Mass.	15.2.1915
			Gertrude Kingston	Maxine Elliott T., N.Y.	2.2.1917
29	His Majesty's T., L.	11.4.1914	Liebler & Co.	Park T., N.Y.	12.10.1914
30			Boston Toy T.	Toy T., Boston, Mass.	18.2.1915
			Neighbourhood Playhouse	Neighbourhood Play- house, N.Y.	14.11.1916
31			None		
32	Lyric T., Hammer- smith	19.12.1920	Deborah Bierne	39th Street T., N.Y.	21.6.1920
33			Gertrude Kingston	Neighbourhood Play- house, N.Y.	14.11.1916
	Criterion T., L.	17.12.1917			
34			(A) Drama League Players	Poli's T., Washington, D.C.	10.12.1917
			John D. Williams	Comedy T., N.Y.	12.3.1919
35			None		
36	Royal Court T., L.	18.10.1921	See W		
37	Repertory T., B'ham Royal Court T., L.	Beginning 9 Oct. 1923 and 18 Feb. 1924 respect- ively	See W		
38	Repertory T., B'ham Royal Court T., L.		See W		
39	Repertory T., B'ham Royal Court T., L.		See W		
40	Repertory T., B'ham Royal Court T., L.		See W		
41	Repertory T., B'ham Royal Court T., L.		See W		

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No.	FIRST WORLD PRODUCTION			FIRST ENGLISH
	BY	AT	ON	BY
42	Lee Shubert	Comedy T., N.Y.	17.1.1923	Violet Vanburgh
43	N.Y. T. Guild	Garrick T., N.Y.	28.12.1923	Mary Moore and Sybil Thorndike
44	Arnold Szyfman	Polish T., Warsaw	14.6.1929	Barry Jackson Barry Jackson
45	! Published by	<i>Time and Tide</i> , L.	22.2.1929	See W
46	N.Y. T. Guild	Colonial T., Boston	29.2.1932	Barry Jackson Barry Jackson
47	Dallas Little T.	Little T., Dallas, Texas	16.4.1934	Christopher Fry People's National T.
48	Charles Macdona	Winter Garden T., L.	25.11.1933	See W
49	Pub. in preface	to <i>On the Rocks</i>	1933	See W
50	N.Y. T. Guild	Guild T., N.Y.	18.2.1935	Barry Jackson
51	Sydney Carroll	Regent's Park, L.	17.7.1934	See W
52	Burgtheater	Academy T., Vienna	4.1.1936	Matthew Forsyth Jack de Leon
53	Published by	<i>Evening Standard</i> , L.	5.12.1936	See W
54	Ronald Adam	Embassy T., L.	16.11.1937	See W
55	Roy Limbert	Malvern Festival	1.8.1938	Roy Limbert
56	Roy Limbert	Malvern Festival	12.8.1939	See W Roy Limbert
57	Berthold Viertel	Schauspielhaus, Zürich	21.10.1948	None
58	None			None

order of Composition with details of their Original Productions on the Stage

First professional production is also given. (B) First production licensed by English Censor.
T., L., 4 June 1907. W=First world production.

& LONDON PRODUCTIONS			FIRST AMERICAN & NEW YORK PRODUCTIONS		
Q	AT	ON	BY	AT	ON
42	Grand T., Fulham	3.2.1925	See W		
43	New T., L.	26.3.1924	See W		
44	Malvern Festival Queen's T., L.	19.8.1929 17.9.1929	N.Y. T. Guild	Martin Beck T., N.Y.	24.2.1930
45			See W		
46	Malvern Festival New T., London	6.8.1932 13.9.1932	See W N.Y. T. Guild	Guild T., N.Y.	4.4.1932
47	Pump Room, Tun- bridge Wells Little T., L.	1.5.1934 18.6.1934	See W		
48			Federal T., W.P.A.	Daly's T., N.Y.	15.6.1938
49			See W		
50	Malvern Festival	29.7.1935	See W		
51			Springfield Civic T.	Civic T., Springfield, Ohio	27.1.1937
52	De la Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea Q. T., L.	17.11.1936 29.5.1944	L. Langner & A. Marshall	Country Playhouse, Westport, Conn.	15.8.1938
53			See W		
54			None		
55	Saville T., L.	22.11.1938	M. Colbourne & Barry Jones Gilbert Miller	Royal Alexandra T., Toronto Henry Miller T., N.Y.	30.10.1939 30.1.1940
56	New T., L.	9.5.1940	None		
57			None		
58			None		

(1)

WIDOWERS' HOUSES

Begun in 1885, laid aside, and finished in 1892. First production by the Independent Theatre Society at the Royalty Theatre, London, on 9th December 1892. First American production by Sam and Lee Shubert at the Herald Square Theatre, New York, on 7th March 1907.

Among the First Players.

James Welch made his name as Lickcheese. Blanche was played by Florence Farr; and the maid whom Blanche strangles, by the future Lady Martin-Harvey. In America, Effie Shannon played Blanche; and Ferdinand Gottschalk, Lickcheese.

'In Widowers' Houses I have shewn middle class respectability and younger son gentility fattening on the poverty of the slum as flies fatten on filth.'

G. B. S.

Shaw's first play was the outcome of an attempt at literary collaboration, the self-chosen sacrificial victim of the encounter being William Archer.

Archer, who fancied himself at dramatic construction and knew all the rules but doubted his ability to write good dialogue, conceived the idea of presenting Shaw with a carefully carpentered plot, confident of his brilliant young friend's ability to clothe it with dialogue and fill it out with some of that daring talk that poured from the young Irishman in such sparkling abundance in real life. Heaven alone knows what rosy fame and fortune Ibsen's translator allowed himself to dream of as the result of such collaboration. Little did he know his man.

Shaw jumped at the idea. All affability and thoroughness, he promptly got to work, blithely telescoped the total plot of Archer's model three acts into the first half of Act I, and blandly asked for more. The astonished Archer replied with some tartness that there was no more, his plot forming a perfect whole. This suited Shaw admirably. No longer encumbered with plot, the Socialist and economist in him took charge and turned the rest of the play into an attack on capitalism and landlordism; whereupon Archer, firmly though in more sorrow than anger, called off the 'collaboration,' and the play, unfinished, was shelved.

To show how the lightest feather can sometimes turn Fate's scales, it is worth recording that Shaw would probably have returned to the idea of writing plays some years sooner than he did, had not Archer fallen fast asleep while Shaw was reading him the first draft of their play. Dismay at finding he could not keep his audience awake convinced Shaw that he lacked the makings of a playwright. Not till long after did he discover that Archer's somnolence was an inveterate habit, and that any play by any author invariably sent him to sleep sooner or later as surely as a drug.

Seven years later, in 1892, the enterprising J. T. Grein was in loud despair at finding none but foreign plays for his Independent Theatre. In the name of Shakespeare and Sheridan and for the reputation of the English stage, he challenged, could not one native sample of the New Drama be found, not one modern playwright in all London? The challenge, more provocative coming from a Dutchman by birth, was promptly taken up by the novice Shaw. Ready, as ever, to step into a breach, always public-spirited, always sensitive on any point touching the dignity or responsibility of his profession as man of letters, he unearthed the seven-year-old manuscript, finished it, presented it under the title of *Widowers' Houses*, and dared Grein to put it on. That intrepid man bit at once, and the pair of them, Grein presenting and Shaw directing, produced *Widowers' Houses* with all the relish of terrorists planting a new type of bomb.

The explosion took place as planned, though the force of it was unexpectedly great. The author was blasted by a whirlwind of abuse, the uprush of which landed him bang in the metropolitan eye, much to his pleasure. And there he was due long to lodge, securely, as though in the public stocks, a notorious person guilty of extreme bad taste, smiling, unruffled, loving it.

(2) THE PHILANDERER

Written in 1893. First production by the New Stage Club at the Cripplegate Institute, London, on 20th February 1905. First American production by Winthrop Ames at the Little Theatre, New York, on 27th December 1913.

Among the First Players.

The part of Leonard Charteris was first played by Milton Rosmer. Later, at the Royal Court Theatre, London, the cast included Ben Webster (Charteris), Lillah McCarthy (Julia), and Wynne Matthison (Grace). In New York these parts were played by Charles Maude, Mary Lawton, and Ernita Lascelles respectively.

'In *The Philanderer* I have shewn the grotesque sexual compacts made between men and women under marriage laws which represent to some of us a political necessity (especially for other people), to some a divine ordinance, to some a romantic ideal, to some a domestic profession for women, and to some that worst of blundering abominations, an institution which society has outgrown but not modified, and which "advanced" individuals are therefore forced to evade.'

G. B. S.

The aforesaid sexual compacts, as displayed by Shaw, were not submitted to the public gaze for some years because the comedy embodying them was smart as well as acid. It demanded polish, finesse, and fashionable gowning, requirements not stocked at Grein's highbrow earnest little Independent Theatre. Those only the commercial theatre could supply, and to Shaw that theatre was locked. He did not bother even to knock, knowing it would be opened to the author of the then infamous Widowers' Houses just long enough for a No Admittance sign to be hung on it before being slammed in his face.

The play has one particular interest: the philanderer is Shaw. A confessed self-portrait, it is no more but no less like the original than most self-portraits. Shaw avouches that the degrading rumpus in Act I, in which the philandering Charteris flounders between the devil of Julia's jealousy and the deep sea of Grace's contempt, is a theatrical version of a scene from real life where the respective parts were played *con furore* by Shaw, Mrs. Patterson, and Florence Farr. Charteris is thus a theatrical reminiscence of Shaw's amorous life somewhere between the ages of twenty-nine, when Mrs. Patterson first pulled a very surprised young Bernard across the threshold of sexual passion, and thirty-seven, when he wrote the play.

Apart from this, *The Philanderer* is a topical curiosity of the nineties. It revolves round the New Woman as



*Harley Granville-Barker and Madge McIntosh in the first production
of Mrs. Warren's Profession (London, 1902)*



Ellen Terry in Captain Brassbound's Conversion

preached and promulgated by Ibsen, whose special protégée she then seemed. That Ibsen's spirit pervades the play is not surprising, for it was written while the Ibsen controversy raged. The Norwegian is almost one of its characters, and in the shape of a bust on the Ibsen Club mantelpiece, centre, he holds his own throughout the second act. At any moment, one feels, the bust may speak. Ibsen's detractors are also there in the character of Cuthbertson, a caricature of The Daily Telegraph's dramatic critic, Clement Scott, who filled his columns with verbose anti-Ibsen vituperation.

True, about the play hangs the air of a fading era. Yet the play dates surprisingly little and still plays surprisingly well. Marital inconstancies are peculiar to no particular age. Every generation has its New Movement, and every New Movement its idol, defended by devotees on the one side and pelted by horrified iconoclasts on the other. That is the way humanity jogs along. While it so jogs, The Philanderer will always surprise modern audiences by giving them their money's-worth—with a slightly unpleasant taste in the mouth thrown in for nothing.

(3) MRS. WARREN'S PROFESSION

Written in 1893-4. First production by the Stage Society at the New Lyric Club, London, on 5th January 1902. First production, after being licensed by the Censor, by Charles Macdona and Arthur Bouchier at the Strand Theatre, London, on 3rd March 1926.

First American production by Arnold Daly at the Hyperion Theatre, New Haven, Connecticut, on 27th October 1905; and then by him at the Garrick Theatre, New York, on 30th October 1905.

Among the First Players.

Mrs. Warren will long be associated with the name of Fanny Brough who first played her.

'I believe that any society which desires to found itself on a high standard of integrity of character in its units should organize itself in such a fashion as to make it possible for all men and all women to maintain themselves in reasonable comfort without selling their affections and their convictions.'

G. B. S.

So do I. Indeed, who does not? But solution of the prostitution problem is not quite as simple as the above non-stop sentence implies. As a social planner, Shaw suffers from sexual emancipation. It would not occur to him as naturally as to others more normally sexed that some women will always *want* to sell or barter their affections, even if the social organization urged by Shaw came about and made such sales economically unnecessary. To Shaw, the flesh is only a nuisance and a hindrance. He could never fully understand that for countless others it is the central pivot of their lives, to be enjoyed, with or without payment, for its own sake without scruple. The oldest profession in the world would not be the oldest had it not attractions that, for some, were abiding and irresistible, not to be wiped out by any Act of Parliament, however Shavian, however sweeping, however perfect.

Mrs. Warren's profession being that of prostitute and procuress, the fortunes attending the play about her need surprise no one.

In England the play remained unlicensed for thirty-one years; that is, until 1924. By then the national squeamishness had abated enough for various spades not only to be called spades but to be regarded without blink or blush and sometimes even to be handled and gripped; although another twenty-odd years were to pass before the Ministry of Health could display posters, without offence and with the help of a quotation from the then Archbishop of Canterbury, calling attention to the dangers of venereal disease.

In America, where there is no Censor, the cast were duly arrested (and released on bail) after the first New York performance on the technical charge of disorderly conduct, being acquitted some eight months later. Between times every critical note had been sounded, most echoing London's shocked outcries of nearly four years before. Thus William Lyon Phelps, from his chair of drama and literature at Yale pronounced the play a good one teaching a much needed moral lesson, while the New York Herald declared it 'an insult to decency.' Between these extremes the decision of the Court of Special Sessions, made known on 6th July 1906, provides a mean. The judge ruled: 'If

virtue does not receive its usual reward in this play, vice at least is presented in an odious light and its votaries are punished. The attack on social conditions is one which might result in effecting some needed reforms. The Court cannot refrain from suggesting, however, that the reforming influence of the play in this regard is minimized by the method of the attack.'

The uproar the play evoked in both countries is not only understandable: it was inevitable, and due not so much to the play's unsavoury topic as to the even more unsavoury moral drawn from it by the author. For Shaw had pointed his accusing finger not at the prostitute but at the society and conditions (according to him) producing her. Squarely on society's—that is, the audience's—back he laid the burden of blame, while the prostitute herself, unburdened, escaped free. This was more than any audience bargained for, and more than enough to make England invoke her Censor, and America her police, in an effort to protect the public from being unmasked before Shaw's unshaking finger as the villain of his piece.

Prostitution is a cold-blooded business, and Shaw was artistically right in making of it a cold-blooded play. The only passion in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* is Shaw's special if not his only brand: moral passion. And while this brand, like others, no doubt originates deep down in the furnaces of feeling, when tempered and ready for employment it can be hard as nails and cold as steel. It is so in this play, where hard, cold social economics sternly warn romance, sentiment, and sweetness to get out and stay out. The play is an artistic presentation of a factually relentless analysis of a social problem, served ice-cold. It was this cool cold-bloodedness that Archer in his later verdict on the play found 'intolerable'; though he had misjudged his man as usual, and mistaken the cold-bloodedness for flippancy.

(4) ARMS AND THE MAN

Written in 1894. First produced by Florence Farr at the Avenue Theatre (later rebuilt as the Playhouse), London, on 21st April 1894. First American production by Richard Mansfield at the Herald Square Theatre, New York, on 17th September 1894.

Among the First Players.

Florence Farr played Raina. In her company were A. E. W. Mason, the future novelist (Plechanoff); and Bernard Gould, the future Sir Bernard Partridge of *Punch* fame (Sergius). In America, the Sergius was Henry Jewett who later founded Boston's most famous stock company; and the Bluntschli, of course, was Mansfield.

'In spite of a Liberal Revolution or two, I can no longer be satisfied with fictitious morals and fictitious good conduct, shedding fictitious glory on robbery, starvation, disease, crime, drink, war, cruelty, cupidity, and all the other commonplaces of civilization which drive men to the theatre to make foolish pretences that such things are progress, science, morals, religion, patriotism, imperial supremacy, national greatness and all the other names the newspapers call them.'

G. B. S.

The first programme of *Arms and the Man* described it deceptively as *A Romantic Comedy*. A comedy, yes: but Shaw can no more produce romance than the cold bath tap a cup of hot chocolate. More properly it is an anti-romantic comedy, with Shaw in full tilt against the stage's stock romantic figures. He plucks the immaculate heroine from her impossible pedestal and turns the musical comedy hero into a figure of fun. In short, he humanized the characters; a process so unheard of at the time that it drew from King Edward VII the verdict that whoever the author, 'he is of course mad.' The play is thus not an attempt to strip war of glamour (a feat it performs incidentally) but a serious though very far from solemn attempt to present the eternal conflict between artificial romantic morality (Sergius) and natural realistic morality (Bluntschli).

Naturally, natural morality prevails; and despite absence from the stage for almost the whole of the second act, the chocolate soldier as opposed to the romantic soldier wins every trick, and indeed runs away with the play. The author was conscious from the first that the part of Bluntschli would always endanger the balance of the play, and so was always at pains to stress the importance of Sergius. He told Archibald Henderson that the character was an attempt at a comic Hamlet: and certainly the tormented Bulgarian, just like the gloomy Dane, suffers agonies from inability to do his duty as he sees it; both are idealists who find

disillusion lurking behind each ideal; and where Hamlet exclaims: 'How all occasions do inform against me!' Sergius cries: 'Mockery everywhere! Everything that I think is mocked by everything that I do.' In Shaw's mind the play's hero is Sergius, and when trying to ensure a successful debut for the play in America Shaw urged and begged Mansfield to play the Bulgarian and not the Swiss. In vain. It does not need a Mansfield to spot which is the more thickly buttered of these two fine parts, the models for which, by the way, were unconsciously supplied by two of Shaw's friends; that for Sergius by Cunninghame Graham, that for Bluntschli by Sidney Webb.

This comedy of the 1885 Servo-Bulgarian War, with its title derived by way of Dryden from the first line of Virgil's *Aeneid*, *Arma virumque cano*, was the first play by Shaw to be seen in America. There, as elsewhere, it pleased and had people talking without making the box-office unduly busy.

(5)

CANDIDA

Written in 1894-5. First production by the Independent Theatre Society at the Theatre Royal, South Shields, Durham, England, on 30th March 1895. First London production by the Stage Society at the Strand Theatre, on 12th July 1900. First American production (amateur) by Anna Morgan in the Fine Arts Building, Chicago, in April 1899; first professional production by Arnold Daly at the Princess Theatre, New York, on 8th December 1903.

Among the First Players.

Janet Achurch created the part of Candida; and Ellen Terry's daughter, Edith Craig, the part of Prossy. The Marchbanks for the Independent Theatre was A. E. Drinkwater, father of John Drinkwater, the poet and playwright; and for the Stage Society, Granville-Barker, who with this part began his long association with Shaw. In America Arnold Daly played Marchbanks.

'Here, then, was the higher but vaguer and timider vision, the incoherent, mischievous, and even ridiculous unpracticalness, which offered me a dramatic antagonist for the clear, bold, sure, sensible, benevolent, salutarily shortsighted Christian Socialist idealism. I availed myself of it in *Candida*.'

G. B. S.

If interested enough in the above quotation to ask Where? we shall find no short answer but this: In the English Pre-Raphaelite Movement. And that, though consonant with *Candida's* subtitle, *A Mystery*, would be rather too mystifying an answer. Perhaps metaphor will help to fashion an answer that is intelligible without being as tortuous and misty as Shaw's in the Preface to *Plays Pleasant*.

Picture *Candida* the play, then, as an arena wherein two gladiators give combat while *Candida* the woman, aloof yet interested as any Roman empress, watches their trial of strength from the royal box, calling out encouragements and warnings now to one, now to the other, until finally she awards the fight on points, graciously descends, and presents the prize with a little speech explaining her decision. The gladiators, of course, are two of the beings who make up the total Shaw; for all of us, as Sergius Saranoff discovered, are not bundles of contradictions so much as bundles of different beings. Now when *Candida* was written the most striking pair in Shaw's bundle were the artist and the social reformer. These two rubbed shoulders constantly; as for instance when visits to Florentine art galleries alternated with prowls round London slums. And both were susceptible, as was the total Shaw, to the eternal religious impulse, the impulse that inspired equally the works of the old Italian painters and the efforts of muscular Christianity to bring hope into the slums. Art, social reform, religion, these three Shaw realized were one, a trinity. It happened that this realization was precipitated by Shaw's sight of the 'pre-Raphaelite' pictures in Birmingham's churches. These not only embodied that trinity, but to Shaw's eyes embodied it in a vigorous and splendidly modern form. The art was modern art; the religion was alive; and because the pictures were painted by his Socialist friends, Burne-Jones and Morris, the social reform was Socialistic. Such a perception was more than enough to generate a play. Without ado, and moved by the religious impulse, Shaw devised the arena in which the artist and the social reformer in him were to take each other's measure and come to grips. Shaw being a dramatist and the essence

of drama being conflict, it was through a conflict that this better acquaintance had to be made. The result was the battle of—and for—*Candida*.

Without fear of much dispute *Candida* may be cited as Shaw's most perfect play. This is another way of saying it is the least Shavian. It behaves itself, and is devoid of farcical extravagances, its comedy rising naturally from its characters and situations and not from intrusions by Joey the Clown. It is not too long. It does not sermonize. It observes the unities. Its conflict is simple. More extraordinary, it brims with emotion and makes people cry. All this from the archsatirist, the prolix unorthodox Shaw! No wonder he called it *A Mystery*.

The play's virtues are almost unending. It not only presents no difficulties to the scenic designer, carpenter, property master, electrician, wardrobe mistress, or to the manager on salary night, but also makes people talk after they leave the theatre. Those not intent upon guessing the poet's secret fall to upon *Candida* herself. Angel, fool, or bitch? they ask. There is room for most answers between Beatrice Webb's verdict of 'sentimental prostitute' and Shaw's own assurance to Ellen Terry that '*Candida*, between you and me, is the Virgin Mother and nobody else.'

(6) THE MAN OF DESTINY

Written in 1895. First production by Murray Carson at the Grand Theatre, Croydon, on 1st July 1897. First London production by The Sunday Special at the Comedy Theatre, on 29th March 1901. First American production (amateur) by Franklin Sargent's Academy of Dramatic Arts at the Empire Theatre, New York, on 16th February 1899; first professional production by Arnold Daly at the Vaudeville Theatre, New York, on 11th February 1904, as a curtain-raiser to *Candida*.

Among the First Players.

In London the title-role was played by Granville-Barker and The Strange Lady by Margaret Halstan. In America Arnold Daly, of course, played Napoleon.

'Hardly more than a bravura piece to display the virtuosity of the two principal performers.'

G. B. S.

A one-act play, and an ill-fated one. Written for Mansfield and turned down by him, and then declined by Irving, it looms large only in the Ellen Terry-Bernard Shaw Correspondence. The trouble with it is that the parts of Napoleon and The Strange Lady need star performers, and star performers do not normally appear in one-act plays except on the variety stage when they have nothing better to do, and for the variety stage The Man of Destiny is, among other defects, too long. In short, the play is a misfit. Shaw, who saw a Croydon performance, was seen to smile twice; not at the play, but at a cat who had decided to appear in it.

(7) YOU NEVER CAN TELL

Written 1895-6. First produced by the Stage Society at the Royalty Theatre, London, on 26th November 1899. First American production (amateur) by the Musical College School of Acting, Chicago, on 24th February 1903; first professional production by Arnold Daly at the Garrick Theatre, New York, on 9th January 1905.

Among the First Players.

James Welch added William to his creations of Shavian parts, the others being Lickcheese and Petkoff. In America, Arnold Daly played Valentine; Mabel Talliaferro, Dolly. In London, Crampton was played by Hermann Vezin.

'You Never Can Tell was an attempt to comply with many requests for a play in which the much paraphrased "brilliancy" of Arms and The Man should be tempered by some consideration for the requirements of managers in search of fashionable comedies for West End theatres. I had no difficulty in complying, as I have always cast my plays in the ordinary practical comedy form in use at all the theatres; and far from taking an unsympathetic view of the popular preference for fun, fashionable dresses, a little music, and even an exhibition of eating and drinking by people with an expensive air, attended by an if-possible-comic waiter, I was more than willing to show that the drama can humanize these things as easily as they, in the wrong hands, can dehumanize the drama.' G. B. S.

In other words, You Never Can Tell is Shaw's As You Like It, the likeness between the Shavian play and the

Shakespearean extending even to the vague air of general application about their four-worded titles.

This effort to write down to the public taste was not successful at the time, and the story of how this earnestly frivolous comedy was *not* produced has already been briefly told. Three years were to pass before the limited public of the Stage Society were given the chance to find out whether it was *As They Liked It*; and ten before the general public, given the same chance at the Court Theatre in 1906, decided—though with no great enthusiasm—that it was.

Whenever Shaw writes a play that falls short of being sermon or treatise he is apt to call it a potboiler. If *You Never Can Tell* is a nonpareil among his potboilers, it is because, while working on it at a Suffolk country house party of Fabians, Shaw, just turned forty, was rapidly falling in love with his future wife. The play's high spirits, the freshness and gay impudence of its wooing scenes, are reflections of his own happy feelings at the time.

(8) THE DEVIL'S DISCIPLE

Written in 1896-7. First production by Richard Mansfield at the Harmanus Bleecker Hall, Albany, New York, on 1st October 1897; and at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, New York City, on 4th October 1897. First English production by Murray Carson at the Prince of Wales Theatre, Kennington, London, on 26th September 1899; and later by J. Forbes-Robertson at the Coronet Theatre, Notting Hill, London, on 7th September 1900.

Among the First Players.

With Dick Dudgeon Mansfield completed his list of Shavian parts—only two, this and *Bluntschli*. At Notting Hill the part of Judith was played by Gertrude Elliott, not yet Mrs. Forbes-Robertson, and sister of Maxine Elliott. Forbes-Robertson played the title-role.

'There never was a play more certain to be written than *The Devil's Disciple* at the end of the nineteenth century. The age was visibly pregnant with it.'

G. B. S.

Enthronement of devil's disciple as hero is in the grand tradition of Lucifer, Prometheus, and Siegfried, all rebels

against deities and so devil's disciples. The trail blazed by such diabolonians as Milton with *Paradise Lost*, Blake with his *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Shelley with his *Prometheus Unbound*, Wagner with *The Ring of the Nibelungs*, and Nietzsche with *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, lay open to any one willing and able to continue blazing it. There was no need to summon Shaw: he was already there. By conviction intellectually equipped to rebel against the Victorian Old Testament god of brimstone and burnt offering, he eagerly stretched out his hand to grasp the torch. It remained only to light it anew. Nothing easier. One of Shaw's favourite assertions being that most of the world's evil is the work of its so-called good men, it was child's play to him to take the converse of this idea—that the world's so-called bad men can do a surprising amount of good, and that goodness, like murder, will out from the most unexpected places—and use it as the basis for a diabolonian melodrama.

The foregoing, prompted of course by the sedulously self-advertising Shaw in the play's preface, is surely too portentous for the occasion. Not for the first time is Shaw flying too high. See him soaring blithely into the empyrean on the wings of such a sentence as this: 'Some enemy of the gods, unterrified champion of those oppressed by them, has always towered among the heroes of the loftiest poetry.' Quite so: but when applied to *The Devil's Disciple*, however indirectly, this is perilously like stuff and nonsense. Consider the stature of Lucifer, Prometheus, Siegfried; and then consider the pocket-sized Dudgeon. Merely to mention all four in the same breath and sentence is embarrassing. However, Shaw asked for it; and just as from his self-comparison with Shakespeare none suffers but Shaw, so none but he suffers from the attempt to force a pygmy into the company of giants. The juxtaposition only accentuates the limitations of Shaw's own stature and his inability or unwillingness to face them.

Fortunately the play can be quickly reduced to its proper status by viewing its genesis from an altogether earthier level.

For an author with seven plays to his credit five years

can seem a long time to wait for a West End financial success. (Arms and the Man, so far Shaw's only play to achieve West End production, was only a *succès d'estime*.) The position was the more tantalizing because You Never Can Tell had come within an ace of possible success: there had been money behind it; a darling of the West End stalls, Cyril Maude, had graced its cast; it had survived a fortnight's rehearsals; and survived them moreover at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, London's most exclusive theatre. Poor Shaw, so near yet still so far!

It was at this frustrated stage in his fortunes as a playwright, with the smell of the Haymarket battle still in his nostrils, that William Terriss, the stunning but unintellectual idol of the Adelphi Theatre's melodramas, suddenly asked Shaw to write him a play suitable for a world tour. Shaw jumped at the idea. Eager to 'arrive' at last, and thoroughly enjoying the descent from the august Haymarket to the popular Adelphi, he quickly obliged with *The Devil's Disciple*. Unfortunately, however, Terriss fell fast asleep during Shaw's reading of the play although neither Milton nor Siegfried, we may be sure, formed any part of the preliminary conversation. Exit, therefore, Terriss, declining the play.

And enter Mansfield. For Shaw, who never forgot the actors who acted his plays, had one eye on his American Bluntschli when writing *The Devil's Disciple*: hence one reason for the play's American setting. Anyway, four thousand miles away and so unable to be lulled into a coma by Shaw's beautiful reading, Mansfield accepted and produced the play. On learning of its success Terriss promptly reopened negotiations with Shaw, but was mortally shot by a lunatic at the Adelphi's stage door before completing them, thus making his final exit and leaving Mansfield in sole managerial possession of the piece. Mansfield, too, had his troubles, however, and when told by a friend that he should go down on his knees and thank God for such a successful play he replied that he knelt nightly, but always ended his prayer: 'But why, O God, did it have to be by Shaw?'

(9) CAESAR AND CLEOPATRA

Written in 1898. First production (amateur) by Anna Morgan at the Fine Arts Building, Chicago, on 1st May 1901. First professional production by J. Forbes-Robertson at the New Amsterdam Theatre, New York, on 29th October 1906. First English production by J. Forbes-Robertson at the Grand Theatre, Leeds, on 16th September 1907. First London production by J. Forbes-Robertson at the Savoy Theatre on 25th November 1907.

Among the First Players.

Forbes-Robertson, of course, as Caesar; and his wife, Gertrude Elliott, as Cleopatra.

“Do ye crave a story of an unchaste woman?” Prologue to Caesar and Cleopatra.

‘Whoever, then, expects to find Cleopatra a Circe and Caesar a hog in these pages had better lay down my book and be spared a disappointment.’

G. B. S.

Clearly, then, one of the Plays for Puritans. But if Circe and hog are absent, so too are the Cleopatra and Caesar of history.

All portraits are to some extent self-portraits. They reveal something of the painter's nature as well as the sitter's. In drawing Caesar, Shaw drew not the kind of man that Caesar was, so much as the kind of man he wanted him to be, and the kind of man he himself would have wanted to be had he been in Caesar's shoes. That is why he went to the unromantic matter-of-fact German historian, Mommsen, for his facts to the exclusion of all other classical authorities. It is a full-length portrait, this imaginary one of Shavius Caesar. It beguiles. It persuades. Compounded of wisdom and philosophy, wreathed with humour and wit, it is infinitely plausible. In Shaw's portrait gallery where his Saint Joan is hung in the place of honour at one end, facing her at the other is his Caesar, while the rest fight as best they can for the remaining wall space at the sides. A great portrait, then? Let us rather say a great Shavian portrait. It is not greatly great, only Shavianly great, and the reason for this nice qualification is that this Caesar, as we should expect, lacks blood.

The real Cleopatra was a figure of tragedy, but the under-sexed Shaw's Cleopatra is a tragedy in a very different sense. If not beyond his comprehension, she was utterly and unbelievably beyond his execution. It were a charity to let it pass at that—with two observations. One: to write about Cleopatra without writing about sex and passion would be about as easy as writing Hamlet without mentioning his murdered father. So, to circumvent the complications that would follow if he sexed her, Shaw makes Cleopatra sixteen in 48 B.C. (though Mommsen makes her nineteen) and makes her behave like a child not much more than half that age. How simple! Two: no criticism of this travesty of one of history's great tragic figures could be more damning than that implied by Shaw himself, when he had just completed the play, in his amazing and written declaration that Cleopatra was 'nearly as good a part as Dolly in *You Never Can Tell*.' If this was one of Shaw's little jokes we must remember his constant assurance that joking was his way of telling the truth. With his Cleopatra in mind, on this occasion we believe him.

This, then, Shaw accomplished: he borrowed a plot from ancient history, put it through the Shavian mill, and turned out a rambling comedy of action which has been well entitled by Oliver Ellis (author of *Cleopatra in the Tide of Time*) *The Funny Old Gentleman and the Silly Little Girl*. This was not quite what he, Shaw, had set out to do.

He set out with one main purpose, and then entertained an afterthought. The main purpose was to fit Forbes-Robertson with a fine part: the afterthought, to improve on Shakespeare's Caesar.

The latter ambition should not be beyond the power of any dramatist worth the name, seeing that Shakespeare's Caesar speaks no more than 120 lines; is, and is meant to be, no more the chief character in the play bearing his name than is the merchant Antonio the chief character in *The Merchant of Venice*; is, and is meant to be, no more than a sketch, a shadow, a rumble or hint of greatness. Yet it will be conceded that even within these self-imposed confines Shakespeare did not do badly; that in fact he succeeded, and did with all proper economy of art mightily

suggest a mighty man. Is Shaw's amiable baldpate, for all his tolerant talk, a mightier?

His main purpose, on the other hand, handsome in itself, Shaw achieved handsomely. 'If Forbes Robertson had not been there to play Caesar, I should not have written Caesar and Cleopatra,' he records. Elsewhere he calls the play 'an instalment of the debt that all dramatists owe to the art of heroic acting,' and forestalls the accolade upon the future Sir Johnston by describing him as an actor 'who can present a dramatic hero as a man whose passions are those which have produced the philosophy, the poetry, the art, and the stagecraft of the world, and not merely those which have produced its weddings, coroner's inquests, and executions.' Yet, though Shaw wooed Forbes-Robertson relentlessly, the more so after Mansfield had declined the play, Forbes-Robertson long shied at Caesar and Cleopatra, frightened of its cost and novelty. Seven years he took to tackle it. But when he did, he made it peculiarly his, surrounding Caesar's bald patch with the halo of his own superb natural dignity.

(10) CAPTAIN BRASSBOUND'S CONVERSION

Written in 1899-1900. First production by the Stage Society at the Strand Theatre, London, on 16th December 1900; later by Vedrenne and Barker at the Royal Court Theatre on 20th March 1906. First American production by Charles Frohman at the Empire Theatre, New York, on 28th January 1907.

Among the First Players.

For the Stage Society: Laurence Irving, Henry Irving's younger son, played Brassbound; Janet Achurch, Lady Cecily; Granville-Barker, Kearney. For Vedrenne and Barker: Lewis Casson (later Sir Lewis Casson), Sidi el Assif; James Carew (soon afterwards Ellen Terry's husband), Kearney; Edmund Gwenn, Drinkwater; and Ellen Terry, Lady Cecily Waynflete. In America, Ellen Terry was again Lady Cecily, and James Carew there played Brassbound.

'If Ellen Terry had never been born, Captain Brassbound's conversion would never have been effected.' G. B. S.

A thoroughly unsatisfactory play in every way. To escape this conclusion Shaviolaters invariably call it 'delightful.'

It fails because its author failed to point its moral and left its i's undotted and its t's uncrossed. It just does not 'get over.'

Long will it be remembered, however, as the play Shaw wrote for the one and only Ellen Terry. It is sad to associate these two with a failure, for this play formed their only stage association. But Ellen's contacts with it resulted in nothing but a succession of wistful disappointments. Thus she blew alternately hot and cold over the part of Lady Cecily; consistently prophesied lukewarm failure for the play; none the less braced herself to interest Irving in it only to meet with sardonic refusal; said Mrs. Patrick Campbell ought to play the part; gave it all up, part and play; and then capping everything, was unable to take part in the Stage Society's performance when that body finally arranged to give one, because she was on tour with Irving at the time. Attend, however, she did—as a spectator—and it was after that performance that she and Shaw, so long lovers-by-correspondence, met for the first time, and beneath the Strand Theatre's stage exchanged a few and surely half-shy, hesitating words. Ellen found her 'Bernie' a 'good kind gentle creature.' And when six years later, in 1906, she at length played Lady Cecily her autumn was upon her, for that year marked her Jubilee on the stage. Finally, by choosing Shaw's play for the melancholy occasion of her farewell tour of America, this radiant being threaded the last bead on to her one unlucky string.

Beatrice Webb called Shaw a sprite. Ellen Terry also was a sprite. And these two, spritelike, were elusive. They caught and touched each other only on paper, in the famous letters; never in life, either off the stage or on. Ellen eluded Shaw as she had eluded so many; Shaw eluded every one; and the play, having eluded Shaw, eluded the public.

But why, it may be asked, did Shaw choose to display the brightest star in England's theatrical firmament against—of all backgrounds!—the darker, seamy side of imperialism? The answer will be found in this book's Shavian Annary. There, under 1897, is the entry 'Afridi Revolt suppressed'; and under 1899 (the year the play

was written), the entries 'Boer War' and 'Anglo-Egyptian Condominium in Sudan proclaimed.' In short, those were the days when British Imperialism was nearing repletion, and Shaw was disgusted by some of the means by which it had reached that satiety. Two of these he accordingly dramatized in the persons of a judge and a soldier, both of whom force civilization on fanatical Africans at the point of punishment and pistol so that fear and force may dominate the situation and finally conquer.

Moral superiority alone, answers Shaw, can dominate any situation, and the only conquest worth while is one achieved with no force save moral force. To illustrate this, he displays Lady Cecily dominating and managing a ticklish situation without recourse to either threats or force—save moral force—as 'Tolstoy' (according to Shaw) 'would have our Chamberlains and Balfours and German Emperors and Kitcheners and Lord Chief Justices and other slaves of false ideas and imaginary fears manage Europe.' Such, then, is Shaw's remedy for an imperialism which irritated him with its force, punitive justice, and filibustering; or, as he puts it, 'its Bismarck worship, Stanley worship, Dr. Jim worship, and now at last Kitchener worship with dead enemies dug up and mutilated.'

Poor Ellen Terry—cast by her 'Bernie' to play the League of Nations!

CHAPTER VIII

THE NINETIES

It was America that gave Bernard Shaw his first taste of solid financial success. If any one could carry a play to success, it was Richard Mansfield. Originally going to America to sing in Gilbert and Sullivan, this Anglo-German soon became a favourite, and in 1897 had added *The Devil's Disciple* to his successes. The results were so lucrative that by the following year Bernard Shaw had become rich enough to give up regular journalism and marry a lady of considerable independent means.

In his description of the wedding there is the familiar Shavian touch. 'I was very ill when I was married, altogether a wreck on crutches and in an old jacket which the crutch had worn to rags. I had asked my friends, Graham Wallas and Henry Salt, the biographer of Shelley and De Quincey, to act as witnesses; and, of course, in honour of the occasion they were dressed in their best clothes. The registrar never imagined I could possibly be the bridegroom: he took me for the inevitable beggar who completes all wedding processions. Wallas, who was considerably over six feet high, seemed to him to be the hero of the occasion; and he was proceeding calmly to marry him to my betrothed, when Wallas, thinking the formula rather strong for a mere witness, hesitated at the last moment and left the prize to me.' The convalescent bridegroom was just on forty-two years of age at the time, and it is enough to say here that this marriage, though childless, proved as unobtrusive and successful in its results as its circumstances were bizarre. Happy marriages, like happy nations, have no history; the world's vulturous newshawks pass them by as too clean to be interesting. Many people were completely unaware of Mrs. Shaw's existence, so studiously did she keep in the background, and when she was alive they would exclaim: 'Oh, *is* there a Mrs. Shaw?' In doing so they were unconsciously paying high tribute to two people who, though living in the limelight, yet managed to keep

their private life private. How different from many modern briefly famous men and women, who, in an age when nothing succeeds like publicity, eagerly expose to the public gaze the details of their domestic life, knowing that the more unsavoury these are the higher the price they can charge for admission to view them.

What sort of man was it that Charlotte Frances Payne-Townshend, six months her husband's junior, led to the registrar of marriages?

Physically, to take the simpler matters first, he was noticeable in any company. It was not his beard, for with the Heir to the Throne and Prime Minister Lord Salisbury setting the example, beards were not unfashionable in the nineties. It was rather its colour, a true Scottish red, and the combination of it with a pair of up-tilting eyebrows and two tufts of hair sprouting from his fine high forehead. The result was a combination of Mephistopheles and Pan. His nose, big and blunt, gave the impression of a man who is well able and even anxious to stand up to blows; not a foxy nose, or in any sense a retreating one, but a pugnacious nose, and the reverse of finely chiselled. Then, unlike the donkey, Shaw has plenty of head above the ears. These, also red, 'are a Shaw speciality,' explains their owner, delightedly describing them with a kind of Dickensian exaggeration. 'They stick straight out like the doors of a triptych; and I was born with them full-size, so that on windy days my nurse had to hold me by the waistband to prevent my being blown away when the wind caught them.' Prattling away thus in a letter to Ellen Terry, Bernard Shaw passes that final and most acid test for sense of humour—an ability to laugh at oneself. And the eyes? Blue and self-conscious. A pair of imps; chameleons; much of their thunder stolen by the eyebrows trying to assert their authority; an actor's eyes; windows of the mind to show his thoughts, complete with blinds to conceal them; piercing eyes, twinkling eyes, eyes that can look through and sometimes past you. Place this head on a tallish, lean, wiry, upright body, and if the picture is incomplete, the world's photograph album will complete it.

As an object Shaw has been a much photographed, much

painted, and much sculptured man. Three busts and a mask by Rodin; two busts, a statuette, and a full-size statue by Troubetzkoy; and portraits by Augustus John, Sir William Rothenstein, Sir John Lavery, John Collier, do not exhaust the long catalogue in which one of the first names is that of Nellie Heath. Painting a picture of Shaw in 1896, she confessed that she was 'tremendously attracted by Shaw's red ears, and red hair, which grew on his forehead in two Satanic whirls.'

But Shaw's outside need not detain us; its appearance is as familiar as that of Queen Victoria, Father Christmas, or the devil. It is the inside that interests. What lies behind that noble brow, what goes on in that dome?

If I were allowed only one word, on pain of torture, with which to describe the mind of Bernard Shaw, I would very deliberately choose from the long list of possible ones the word healthy. I would choose this word because, since every word automatically suggests its opposite by contrast, healthiness is conspicuous only against a background of unhealthiness, and a healthy mind conscious of its healthiness only among diseased ones. This was precisely the case with Bernard Shaw. In order to appreciate this, and to see how Shaw, though he lived in the nineties, was never of them, and how his essential healthy-mindedness and peculiar buoyancy never allowed him to sink into their bogs of glorified decay, we must turn back for a moment to the nineties themselves.

A unique period in England's history, the nineties marked the end of a prodigious meal. The small island of England had been eating for more than half a century, and now she was swollen with empire. She had eaten quietly and skilfully and, above all, abundantly. She was immensely full, immensely satisfied. John Bull, that gross personification of middle-class commercialism that had long supplanted St. George as the symbol of national inspiration and achievement, looked upon his Empire, and looked upon his Trade, and behold! both of them were good. His great paunch grew bigger and bigger until it nearly burst its Union Jack. There was nothing more to be done but to sit tight and hold tight, and to rub his stomach as an aid to digestion.

About such full-fed satiety there is a calm, but of the kind that goes before a storm. Since the law of life is change, all contentment carries the germ of discontentment in its core. As the petals of a flower unfold they expose to the sun for ripening the seeds of its own decay; and when the fruit is ripe, it falls. Dean Inge, watching the Diamond Jubilee, tells us how the very plenitude of that pomp filled him with foreboding for the future.

Every success involves a cost, and the success of empire abroad was achieved only at the cost of ugliness at home, especially in the industrial north. Early in the century Cobbett, bold lover of England, had called London the Great Wen; what would he have called the Potteries or Manchester when the century ended? The black smoke that lay over the industrial sores of the north seemed like a pall purposely placed there in order to veil human atrocities from the sight of heaven. It was well within living memory that women in the mines had worn harness, animal-like, and young children at looms had worked such long hours that when they could no longer keep their eyes open they fell asleep, and so fell into the machinery and were cut to pieces: such horrors being suffered in the name of trade and empire. The spirit of darkness and ugliness entered the very homes of the people, where fathers beat their children with sadistic relish in the name of filial piety and the fifth commandment, and where the walls were hung with pictures of the Landseer school, of which one of the distinguishing marks was the bloody realism of its stags at bay, bleeding hounds, dead fish, and wounded game.

This immense satisfaction and complacency of empire, with the ugliness attending it, produced its natural reaction. In politics a spur was given to Socialism, in religion to atheism or agnosticism, and in art to the cry of Art for Art's Sake. Art, it was urged, could have no truck with such a world. If that was life it were best to avoid it. If life was ugly and practical, then art must be beautiful and useless, and be careful to keep itself to itself. The art of the nineties, therefore, looking out upon the world for its inspiration, and seeing only John Bull's beflagged stomach filling the sky, decided to avert its gaze from a spectacle

so Philistine, and feed upon itself. But art, unless it has its roots in life, is a dead art, and like all dead things soon decays. With devilish instinct its protagonists in the nineties perceived this, and proceeded to make a virtue of their secluded putrefaction. What was natural was wrong, what was decadent was good. Nature was barbaric, therefore she must be bettered. This movement, which turned its back on the sun and divorced itself from life and nature, had found for its god, Oscar Wilde; for its gadfly, Whistler; for its godfather, Walter Pater; for its illustrator, Aubrey Beardsley; and for disciples, pale wisps of creatures in whose rooms the Yellow Book lay decorously on the table and the scent of green carnations lay heavy on the air. It was an atmosphere which honest men found difficult to breathe, and its sickliness has been brought out pungently by Gilbert Chesterton in the fine poem which begins:

A cloud was on the mind of men, and wailing went the weather,
Yea, a sick cloud upon the soul when we were young together.
Science announced nonentity and art admired decay;
The world was old and ended: but you and I were gay.
Round us in antic order their crippled vices came—
Lust that had lost its laughter, fear that had lost its shame.
Like the white lock of Whistler, that lit our aimless gloom,
Men showed their own white feather as proudly as a plume.
Life was a fly that faded, and death a drone that stung;
The world was very old indeed when you and I were young.
They twisted even decent sins to shapes not to be named:
Men were ashamed of honour; but we were not ashamed.

In this world moved Bernard Shaw, as perforce did every one who was connected with the arts professionally. The very mention of his name seems to clear the poisoned air a little. Here on the one hand were men, a whole school of them, who talked exquisitely, but only for effect; and on the other, a man who never talked for effect, but who, having something to say, took care always to say it as effectively as possible. Walter Pater would go for long walks turning over words in his mind to find the right one as though they had been pebbles in his pocket. To him and his neophytes, thoughts were merely the raw material for wonderful sentences, and these in turn were merely beautiful

'jewels five words long.' They had so little to say that they had to be very careful how they said it. But Shaw, overflowing with material, was able to let his style take care of itself. Abounding in ideas, he could afford to scatter them prodigally. For posing he had no time, and if he was pale, he was pale from work and abstemious habits, not from dissipation or design. While precious dilettantes spent their ample time keeping up Bohemian appearances, or nursing their reputations for wit by throwing little poisoned epigrams across fashionable dinner tables, Shaw spent his time writing Fabian tracts and learning to ride a bicycle. While the Wildes and the Whistlers, the Swinburnes and the Moores engaged in petty quarrels with each other over sonnets or insults, Shaw engaged in a big quarrel with the whole world over life. It was not that he was incapable of holding his own at the dinner table; a man who can coin phrases like 'The Seven Deadly Virtues' is a match for any company. It was simply that his own habit of mind was so astringently healthy, so purposeful, and so concerned with morals, that contact with anything so purposeless as an Art for Art's Sake movement was like massaging a corpse; not only unpleasant, but a waste of time. The wit was there, but it was not diseased. And it was not diseased because his mind was clean, as clean as Robert Louis Stevenson's. The sinister slime from Chelsea never oozed as far as Fitzroy Square, and when in '94 Shaw wrote *Candida* and in its Marchbanks drew a portrait of an aesthete, it was an etherealized one. Marchbanks may belong to another world, but that world is certainly not hell, and Shaw's poet is no relation to Dorian Gray. In art, too, Shaw is a rebel, rebelling against rebellion, for even his poet is clean of limb, sound of wind, sane in mind, and good at heart.

In short, Chesterton's poem might have been addressed to Bernard Shaw instead of to E. C. Bentley, but that the Irishman was middle-aged, for he, too, was gay, unafraid, and unashamed. And since the public insisted on laughing in any event, it was better and healthier that it should laugh at a supremely live red devil in Jaegers than with portentous dead devils with Yellow Books and Green

Carnations. In 1895 Shaw helped to send these dead devils packing by writing a commissioned article called *The Sanity of Art*, in which he claimed that Art for Art's Sake was nonsense; and that all art, to be really great, must have a faith and a purpose behind it; and that before any one could paint angels who were really angelic or devils who really terrified, as Fra Angelico and Botticini painted them, it was necessary for him to believe not only in the sacred mission of Art, but also in heaven and hell. No doubt the Art for Art's Sake movement died of its own diseases, but Shaw's pamphlet formally buried the corpse, which, already dead, at last lay down.

In a letter to Ellen Terry, dated May 1897, that is, just a year before he married, Bernie, as she calls him, now past forty, wonders whether he can entice Ellen to come and visit him at Dorking, where he and Sidney and Beatrice Webb are sharing a house to get on with their respective works. (It is to be noted that Miss Payne-Townshend is also there.) Shaw doubts his ability to persuade her as he proceeds to describe 'our eternal political shop; our mornings of dogged writing, all in separate rooms; our ravenous plain meals; our bicycling; the Webbs' incorrigible spooning over their industrial and political science; Miss P. T., Irish, shrewd and green-eyed, finding everything "very interesting"; myself always tired and careworn, and always supposed to be "writing to Ellen." You'd die of it all in three hours, I'm afraid.' Ellen did not appear. No doubt both she and Bernard Shaw felt that their relationship would suffer in some indefinable way if they met. As things were, they wrote to each other for three years continuously, the graph of their correspondence reaching its peak in the middle year, 1897, when they wrote on an average of every three days. In this way, whenever he was tired, Shaw could as it were rest his head on Ellen Terry's lap as Marchbanks rested his on Candida's; only for Shaw it was in imagination and through the post, without fatigue for Ellen or cramp for himself.

Bernard Shaw first mounted that new-fangled Victorian velocipede, the bicycle (what a godsend it was to Punch), on the top of Beachy Head. He was staying in the wooden

hotel there with a select party of fellow Fabians, and his efforts set the coastguards laughing 'as no audience had ever laughed at his plays.' In short, Shaw lived the outward life of a respectable, middle-class, busy professional man, with hobbies and relaxations to suit. No longer the Complete Outsider he had been in the early eighties, he was accepted in the nineties as the Perfect Crank, and a most amusing one. People and clubs (not those in Pall Mall) collected him, and he became a lion of what in America are called pink teas. Having years before, at a meeting of the Shelley Society, declared himself a teetotaller, an atheist, and a vegetarian, he would now allow himself to be caught and displayed as Public Crank Number One. Thus we find him lecturing to the Women's Progressive Society at the Ideal Club (these names!) on Feminine Meanness, the lecture 'to be followed by an open discussion.' How the ladies must have loved it! Shaw declared that all men over forty were scoundrels; asked by a lady whether the remark applied to her sex too, he replied that in the case of women the age was thirty. After another lecture, while getting his hat from the cloakroom, Shaw overheard someone remark: 'The man's a fraud.' He at once accosted him with 'Sir, allow me the pleasure of shaking by the hand the only man besides myself who understands the truth about Bernard Shaw!'

His vegetarianism was no new thing. In 1881 he had given up the 'habit of chewing the dead bodies of animals.' The use of furs for the personal adornment of women was also obnoxious to him. Firing off adjectives like bullets from a machine-gun, he begs one wearer to recognize and forswear fur 'for the nasty, smelling, savage, cruel, thoughtless, bestial thing it is.'

Ever ready to be an 'Ist' or an 'Ite' or an 'Anti' of some sort, Bernard Shaw is an anti-vaccinationist and anti-vivisectionist of the most unpacific type. He objects to vivisection on the familiar Puritan ground that it not only hurts the victim but gives rein to the sadistic impulses of the vivisector. Lust for cruelty is thus permitted by law (though admittedly also controlled by it) and sanctioned by public opinion as being necessary for the attainment

of knowledge. No, says Shaw: 'If you cannot attain to knowledge without torturing a dog, you must do without knowledge.'

His objections to vaccination are not complicated so much as numerous. In the first place, not believing in its infallibility he regards it as a superstition, a 'corrupt and mischievous' one, and therefore objects to compulsory vaccination much as a Moslem would object to compulsory baptism. Then, his natural fastidiousness of person is such that he would in any case demur at the prospect of a hostile army of diseased microbes invading the Shavian blood stream; but when told that the doctor empowered to compel the operation also has a vested interest in it, and that without it and similar operations his income would suffer serious depletion, he recoils violently, and condemns the whole affair as a professional conspiracy as well as a lay superstition. In fact, Bernard Shaw's objection to vaccination, 'dirty, dangerous, and unscientific' in method as he considered it at any rate in 1906, is but part of his much more virulent objection to the profit of the private doctor administering it: that is, to the privateness of the private doctor.

And this, of course, is part of his wider hatred of all private things, from property downwards. For Bernard Shaw is your true Republican. He loves and lives for the *Res Publica*, or Public Thing, and longs to smash or abolish or municipalize or nationalize the Private Thing wherever he finds it. Thus the principle of the 1947 nationalization of medical service had his wholehearted approval, and a guess that he would choose the Public Trustee instead of private persons to execute his will would be the correct guess.

For all his dogmatic reiteration and hard pounding, however, Shaw as a crank was neither always consistent nor ever very convincing. In application to personal conduct his doctrines too often crumbled and dissolved. Holding all property theft, for example, he yet became and remained a man of property; and still advocating equal incomes for all, he survived as one of the wealthy few. Nor was his diet really completely vegetarian, products such as butter-milk (one of his staple drinks) being of animal derivation.

True, in 1881 he risked smallpox and caught it rather than be vaccinated, but attacked in his eighties by pernicious anaemia he was treated and cured by concentrated extract of animal liver; upon which intelligence, the public Shaw had belaboured so assiduously permitted itself a sardonic smile, and an even more studied neglect of their tormentor's exhortations than thitherto. For this cure, as I am informed by a responsible medical authority, would not have been brought to its present state of efficiency so quickly, if at all, had it not been for vivisection experiments, starting with those on hens in 1740 by Menghini and ending with those on dogs in 1920 by Whipple.

To put it mildly, then, Bernard Shaw's survival depended not only on the eating of meat in its most concentrated form, but also on the vivisection and sufferings of animals. We talk about people who want to have their cake and eat it: Shaw went one better by eating the very cake which he persistently denounced as unfit for human consumption. How dare he reject his cake and eat it? He might answer that a logical person cannot live in an illogical world without practising some of its illogicalities, and that a man is no more justified in refusing to save his life because the means of saving it was derived from vivisected animals than in going about shirtless because the button-sewing industry was shockingly underpaid. This is no answer: martyrs—to Christian Science, for example—frequently die for their faith, or rather for their lack of it; again, if one deals with an employer who treats his workers badly one changes to an employer who treats them well. One hopes that the real Shaw would prefer to answer, that though he took his liver extract like a bad old boy and lived, the world would be a better place had there been no vivisection, no extract of liver, and he had died; for at his age he was quite ready to go the way of all flesh, and indeed would have been, like the majority of the patients in the care of his famous creation, Sir Ralph Bloomfield Bonnington, 'better dead.'

Actually, of course, nothing carried weight in the pernicious anaemia incident—neither Shaw nor his convictions—beside the determination of a devoted wife with a sick

husband on her hands. Charlotte, practical and capable, took charge of sickroom and patient alike and stood no nonsense. The scene at its briefest is easily visualized.

Mrs. Shaw (entering). Here's your medicine.

The Patient (suspiciously). What is it?

Mrs. Shaw. Don't ask questions. Swallow it.

The Patient (after obeying). Ugh!

Mrs. Shaw. There's a good boy. Now try and go to sleep.

The Patient. I——

Mrs. Shaw. Hush! (She tiptoes out. The Patient sleeps.)

Returning to the nineties, we see a spare, vigorous Shaw approaching what is called the prime of life. Garbed in a one-piece suit of knitted brown wool fashioned by Dr. Jaegers, or in velocipeding knickers and Norfolk jacket, he strides or cycles about the Surrey hills on the white motorless roads. From his beard, his hobby, and the impression he gives of always being busy, an irreverent onlooker might well have named him the Bicycling Beaver. Ever industrious, ever anxious to be in the vanguard of the New, he always seemed fearful of being left behind. The following glimpse he gives of his room in Fitzroy Square in 1897 is of a factory working overtime on the remanufacture of ideas. 'Whilst I am dressing and undressing I do all my reading. The book lies open on the table. I never shut it, but put the next book on top of it long before it's finished. After some months there is a mountain of buried books, all wide open, so that all my library is distinguished by a page with the stain of a quarter's dust or soot on it.' The impression is not one of restlessness but urgency, as though the spinning of the earth was something he ought to try to keep up with; and when seen in the London streets or on the Malvern hills he always walked as though he had an appointment with himself and might be late for it.

With no dependants and few intimacies, Bernard Shaw's cares have been few, as this world goes. Where some people love persons and other people things, Shaw loves ideas. Outside that cold realm where all is intellect and theory and sublimation he had no passionate attachments,

and was pursued rather than pursuing. Physical passion, a bog to so many, was to him but a cheerful flower to be savoured and enjoyed in passing. He told Frank Harris: 'You may count the women who have left me nothing to desire on less than the fingers of one hand.' Only to moral passion was he a slave, and a willing one. His lifelong mistress was no woman but that bluestocking, intellect, from whose embraces he experienced pleasures comparable to those found by earthier men in sex, or in gambling or drinking. Thus he was difficult to capture, to corner, to pin down. He did not fall into the snares most men find along their path, because, like a sprite, he was always in the air above them with his feet well off the ground. Humanity's common denominators were not common to him, and he declined to be one of their multiples. One of his first journalistic stunts, for instance, was to found a Society for the Abolition of Christmas. Again, when asked to attend the celebrations at Stratford-upon-Avon in honour of Shakespeare's birthday, he replied that he had no intention of honouring Shakespeare's birthday seeing that he did not honour his own.

This lack of common touch with humanity is the saddest thing about Bernard Shaw; for it lays the withering hand of a great sterility upon his work. He cannot touch people; cannot move them, either to action or even to tears. Though his sole interest is the progress of humanity towards godhead, he is never quite at home with humanity's human beings. Thus in early middle age he was a lone man, which is not the same thing as being alone. The early gaucheries had long since disappeared, and he had successfully fortified his shyness, but there remained, as he tells us, 'a deeper strangeness which has made me feel all my life a sojourner on this planet rather than a native of it.' As a sojourner, he was determined to travel light and quickly. To him traditions were things to break with because they held him back, roots things to pull up because they held him down. This feeling of being a sojourner made him, and has kept him, unsocial in the sense that he is nothing of a clubman. He will go readily to a club provided it be a debating club, for then there is work to do



Mrs. Bernard Shaw

and truth to be expounded; but he is constitutionally incapable of going to a club to relax, or do nothing, or mix with his fellows; and doctrinally incapable of going there to drink with them. He upbraids Shakespeare for frequenting the Mermaid Inn, and complains of Dr. Johnson wasting his life trifling with literary fools in taverns when he should have been shaking England with the thunder of his spirit. Thus his membership of the Royal Automobile Club had nothing to do with its members or conviviality: he went there to swim. Likewise when an acquaintance said he was going to the Authors' Club, it was the unsocial aloofness of the sojourner as well as ironic wit that made Shaw ask: 'Any authors there?' Similarly, he will go to the Savoy, say, but only to propose the health of an Einstein in a brilliant speech.

Kindly and conscientious, shy, arid, and aloof, Shaw had no bosom friends, none with whom he could rub shoulders on terms of equality, none with whom he wanted to make the welkin ring. He knew too many people, and too many kinds of people, to be intimate with any for long save those Blue Books incarnate, Sidney and Beatrice Webb. He could help or argue with people, dazzle, amuse, irritate or shock them, but he could never mix with them. Oscar Wilde perceived this, and put Bernard Shaw once for all a little apart from other men when he dryly said of him: 'An excellent man: he has no enemies: and none of his friends likes him.'

Work, that sovereign remedy, filled the gaps left empty by Bernard Shaw's avoidance of the common pleasures and social habits of more worldly men. Work is a habit, and Shaw has never grown out of it. Now when a teetotal and ascetically unworldly man gets the habit of work badly, taking to it as a consolation until ultimately it becomes a drug, one of two things happens: he overworks and breaks down, or he marries. Bernard Shaw did both, and in that order. No man, not even Shaw, can live for long on a bloodless diet of ideas and intellect and work accompanied by a three-year course of love by correspondence, such as Shaw's with Ellen Terry, without excessive strain. When would the fellow's feet touch earth? It was impossible to

fall in love with him, according to Mrs. Sidney Webb: for, as she said, 'You cannot fall in love with a sprite; and Shaw is a sprite in such matters, not a real person.' The object of discussion was the first to agree. 'It is certainly true,' he replied. 'I am fond of women (or one in a thousand, say): but I am in earnest about quite other things.' Shrewd and green-eyed Miss Payne-Townshend thought differently, and managed to bring the sprite to earth in her own way; though not without the sprite's conscious co-operation. Two years previously, in 1896, Shaw had written to Ellen Terry concerning the lady Fabian, stating that he proposed to 'refresh his heart by falling in love with her.' So came about the marriage with the bridegroom on crutches. He was on crutches because the overwork and the breakdown came first. The indefatigable fellow, living chiefly on his nerves, had made such demands on his system that it was unable to withstand a trifling injury caused by a too tightly laced shoe, with the result than an abscess developed, involving two operations which kept him on crutches for eighteen months.

Figuratively speaking, Shaw had exhausted himself in making his bed. Now, convalescent, with a position and a reputation, and with money from *The Devil's Disciple* to pay his way, he was content to lie on it and to ask a wife to share it. Accordingly, in May 1898, Bernard Shaw resigned from *The Saturday Review*, and on the first of June following, amid the first rumblings of the Boers in South Africa and two months before Bismarck's death, Mr. and Mrs. Shaw led each other home from the registrar's. Past their first youth, they knew what they wanted from marriage: not a paradise of romance, nor children; but friendship, companionship, and the bond of common interests.

Mrs. Shaw, having rescued her husband from the untidy litter of his bachelor years in Fitzroy Square, now took in hand his illness, with its accompanying accidents, and the convalescence that followed: in short, a general Shavian repair. It took time. The pursuit of health involved considerable stays in comfortably furnished houses at Haslemere, Hindhead, and in the Isle of Wight; before finally,

after the sunshine of a Mediterranean cruise, Charlotte led her husband back to her own flat at 10 Adelphi Terrace, and there, between Thames and Strand, made a home that was to last for twenty-seven years.

That was in 1900. Looking on her, the married man found his wife 'perfectly placid and proper and pleasant.' And so she remained. So she was some thirty years later when Aircraftman T. E. Shaw, *alias* Lawrence of Arabia, became a friend of the Shaws and found they mixed 'like bacon and eggs.' Indeed, they made a remarkably sensible couple, Mrs. Shaw being even sensible enough never to make it clear to her husband—in words—that in the home she wore the trousers. With no interest in domestic details, Shaw was well content.

CHAPTER IX

THE PLAYS CONTINUED

(11) THE ADMIRABLE BASHVILLE: OR, CONSTANCY UNREWARDED

Written in 1901. First production by the Stage Society at the Imperial Theatre, London, on 7th June 1903. First American production by the Philadelphia Little Theatre at the Little Theatre, Philadelphia, on 8th February 1915.

Among the First Players.

Ben Webster as Cashel Byron, and Henrietta Watson as Lydia Carew. In a remarkable make-up resembling Bernard Shaw the small part of the Policeman was played, complete with a Dublin accent, by C. Aubrey Smith, who years afterwards distinguished himself as a film star and reigned, as Sir Aubrey Smith, over the British colony in Hollywood.

‘I can write blank verse myself more swiftly than prose, and that, too, of full Elizabethan quality plus the sense of the absurdity of it as expressed in the lines of the Ancient Pistol.’ G. B. S.

THE ADMIRABLE BASHVILLE is a dramatization in blank verse of Shaw’s novel, Cashel Byron’s Profession.

The laws of international copyright in 1901 enabled any one abroad to dramatize an author’s works and collect the resulting royalties. After Cashel Byron’s Profession had suffered several such dramatizations in America, a country which even in Dickens’s day had been hard of hearing when injustices to British authors were involved, Shaw took steps to protect himself by dramatizing the novel himself. Pressed for time, he chose blank verse to write in because in that medium he found he could ‘do in a week what it would have cost me a month to do in prose.’

(12) MAN AND SUPERMAN

Written in 1901–3. First production by the Stage Society at the Royal Court Theatre, London, on 21st May 1905; and subsequently by Vedrenne and Barker at the same theatre on 23rd May 1905.

First American production by Robert Loraine at the Hudson Theatre, New York, on 5th September 1905. The Hell Scene was first played by Robert Loraine at the Royal Court Theatre, London, on 4th June 1907.

Among the First Players.

Ann was first played by Lillah McCarthy. Straker was played by Edmund Gwenn and Octavius by Lewis (later Sir Lewis) Casson. Tanner was played in England by Granville-Barker made up as Bernard Shaw, and in America by Robert Loraine.

‘MY DEAR WALKLEY,

You once asked me why I did not write a Don Juan play. The levity with which you assumed this frightful responsibility has probably by this time enabled you to forget it; but the day of reckoning has arrived: here is your play!’

G. B. S.

Arthur Bingham Walkley, The Times dramatic critic, fondly thought he had Shaw on toast when he asked him for a Don Juan or love play. He just did not believe the fellow could write one. It is always risky, however, to ask Shaw for this or for that: the suppliant never knows what he may receive. Ask him for a murder play, and he will give you a Doctor’s Dilemma; for a religious play, and he will overwhelm you with a Back to Methuselah; for a children’s play, and he will oblige with an Androcles and a Lion; for a patriotic play, and he will embarrass you with an O’Flaherty, V.C.; and so on. Walkley, asking for a play of passion and sex, got Man and Superman. Nor could he complain, for though devoid of passion the play abounds in sex.

It was a tremendous success. In America alone it put £40,000 into Robert Loraine’s pocket in seven months. Why is obvious: Shaw had reversed the usual roles in the battle of the sexes to make man the hunted, woman the hunter. The great majority of theatre-goers being women, any theme sporting the female of the human species as deadlier than the male must enliven the box-offices, for the deadlier ones enjoy nothing more than the spectacle of themselves in pursuit of a quarry through three acts to pounce upon him as the curtain falls.

But Man and Superman supports another theme, a

weightier one: mankind's pursuit of something better than its present self, the Superman of the title figuring as this better something. This, unfortunately, no audience can ever guess at an ordinary showing of the play, nor find in it anything beyond a brilliantly perverse comedy, nor in the Superman of its title anything more than a man-conquering Woman. No blame to the audience, for usually the third act is not played. And rightly. For this act—a dream in Hell—is a veritable cuckoo with bulk and strength enough to oust the comparatively fragile acts one, two, and four clean out of a nest originally designed for no such intruder.

Intruder or not, this dream of John Tanner about Don Juan in Hell remains unique and probably the most important single act and scene in all the Shavian drama. In it Shaw makes his bow to the world as a dramatist of religious philosophy. That was something new in drama, even for Shaw. It is easy to criticize the flourish of his bow. The Hell Scene may not be good theatre and entertainment as commonly understood. But it survives as an immense and brilliant feat for all that. During its course one seems to catch the delight of the author's mind as it whirs in an ecstasy of sustained cerebration. The philosophy that Shaw contributed to drama on this historic occasion, though only a piece, is yet so coherent and rounded, so lucid though richly intricate, so integral though neither exhaustive nor exhausting, and so massive, that after ten years' reflection he still felt free to describe it as 'a careful attempt to write a new Book of Genesis for the Bible of Evolutionists.' By virtue of its cuckoo, then, Man and Superman counts in the development of Shaw as a dramatist, and Walkley got much more than he bargained for or deserved.

In brief, Shaw accepted Walkley's challenge by taking the Don Juan legend in its Mozartian form and turning it into a parable of Creative Evolution. 'But,' he explains, 'being then at the height of my invention and comedic talent, I decorated it too brilliantly and lavishly. I surrounded it with a comedy of which it formed only one act. . . . Also I supplied the published work with an

imposing framework consisting of a preface, an appendix called *The Revolutionist's Handbook*, and a final display of aphoristic fireworks. The effect was so vertiginous, apparently, that nobody noticed the new religion in the centre of the intellectual whirlpool.'

The famous Hell Scene one might recognize as the first distant boom of the ice cracking in the mountains above, signal of some colossal avalanche some day to descend from those heights of Shavian philosophy, as indeed it did twenty years later as the glacial Back to Methuselah.

(13) JOHN BULL'S OTHER ISLAND

Written in 1904. First production by Vedrenne and Barker at the Royal Court Theatre, London, on 1st November 1904. First American production by Arnold Daly at the Garrick Theatre, New York, on 10th October 1905.

Among the First Players.

In England, Louis Calvert played Tom Broadbent; Granville-Barker, Peter Keegan; Nigel Playfair, Hodson; and Graham Browne (Marie Tempest's husband), Patsy. Lillah McCarthy succeeded Ellen O'Malley as Nora, the first of her many Shavian parts.

In America Arnold Daly played the part of Larry Doyle.

'John Bull's Other Island was written at the request of Mr. William Butler Yeats, as a patriotic contribution to the repertory of the Irish Literary Theatre. Like most people who have asked me to write plays, Mr. Yeats got rather more than he bargained for.'

G. B. S.

Quite beyond the resources of Dublin's newly formed Abbey Theatre, Shaw's 'patriotic' contribution was also preposterously at discord with the neo-Gaelic Movement that Yeats and Co. made it their business to cultivate. Far from being pigeon-holed, however, this piece of Abbey Theatre potential poison soon served as most timely meat for the Royal Court Theatre in London. There it was an immediate success. As such, the play not only gave a flying start to the adventurous Messrs. Vedrenne and Barker who were to manage the little theatre in Sloane Square, S.W., with many more ups and downs for three auspicious years; it also went far towards making this new

London shop window secure. For a metropolitan production, Shaw was no longer dependent upon the Stage Society's solitary Sunday and Monday performances. His plays were no longer London vagrants. Nearly ten years were to elapse before he completely conquered the West End with *Pygmalion*, but meanwhile, thanks largely to *John Bull's Other Island*, he was established in the South West End with every sign of success.

Thither, as might be expected, all that was intelligent in the West End went, including intelligent Cabinet Ministers. After holding its place in the Court's repertoire for five months, *John Bull's Other Island* actually achieved a Command Performance—made memorable by the fact that King Edward VII laughed so much that he broke a chair. In short, every one was happy.

Joe Devlin, the prominent Irish M.P. at Westminster, once paid *John Bull's Other Island* the compliment of saying that it posed the Irish Problem finely, fully, and for ever. As neither the English character nor the Irish could of course be altered by the mere establishment of Home Rule, it follows that as a collection of character studies this pre-Home Rule play is very nearly as fresh and funny and sad and true as when written. Pruned ruthlessly it still plays well, as I know by experience, having once had to prepare a version that cut three-quarters of an hour from the play to enable the actors (and, equally important, the baggage car) to catch the night train from New Glasgow in Prince Edward Island. In consequence what remained played like a house afire. Stripped of their topical politics, the play's characters stood on their own feet, never so real, never so alive. In the exuberant wealth of its characterization, indeed, *John Bull's Other Island* is sheer Dickens, just as it is in its tendency to caricature: apart, that is, from the character of Father Keegan, a mystical creation well beyond Dickens's range or comprehension.

(14) HOW HE LIED TO HER HUSBAND

Written in 1904. First production by Arnold Daly at the Berkeley Lyceum, New York, on 26th September 1904. First

English production by Vedrenne and Barker at the Royal Court Theatre, London, on 28th February 1905.

Among the First Plays.

Arnold Daly played Apjohn, the juvenile of the play's three characters. At the Court Theatre Gertrude Kingston played the heroine, Granville-Barker her lover, and A. G. Poulton her husband.

'Need I say that any one who imagines that How He lied to Her Husband retracts Candida, or satirizes it, or travesties it, or belittles it in any way, understands neither the one nor the other?'

G. B. S.

Like so many of Shaw's plays, a *pièce d'occasion*. In America Arnold Daly was wearing himself out giving nightly performances of Napoleon in *The Man of Destiny* and of Marchbanks in *Candida*. Though *Candida* needed a second play to fill out the evening's bill, what Daly wanted was something shorter and less strenuous than *The Man of Destiny*. Shaw promptly obliged with *How He lied to Her Husband*, writing it during four days of ceaseless rain in Scotland.

A kind of *Candida* in reverse, the play contained several allusions to the bigger play, all of them omitted later: hence the query quoted above, cabled by Shaw to Daly.

This was the first of Shaw's plays to be filmed.

(15)

MAJOR BARBARA

Written in 1905. First production by Vedrenne and Barker at the Royal Court Theatre, London, on 28th November 1905. First American production by Grace George in association with Louis Calvert at the Playhouse, New York, on 9th December 1915.

Among the First Players.

Annie Russell (followed by Lillah McCarthy) in the title-role, with Granville-Barker as Cusins; Rosina Filippi, Lady Britomart; Louis Calvert, Andrew Undershaft; Clare Greet, Rummy Mitchens; Dorothy Minto, Jenny Hill; and Edmund Gwenn, Bilton. In America the Major was Grace George; Calvert again Undershaft; and among the rest Conway Tearle, Bill Walker; John Cromwell, Lomax; Ernest Lawford, Cusins; Guthrie McClintic, Morrison; and Clarence Derwent, Stephen Undershaft.

'The crying need of the nation is not for better morals, cheaper

bread, temperance, liberty, culture, redemption of falling sisters and erring brothers, nor the grace, love and fellowship of the Trinity, but simply for enough money. And the evil to be attacked is not sin, suffering, greed, priestcraft, kingcraft, demagoguery, monopoly, ignorance, drink, war, pestilence, nor any other of the scapegoats which reformers sacrifice, but simply poverty.' G. B. S.

Those who hold that men's minds and hearts are closely linked to their pockets and bank balances will consider Major Barbara, ethically speaking, Shaw's most provocative and urgent play. Economics, he points out, plays as big a part in his plays as does the knowledge of anatomy in the works of Michelangelo, and Major Barbara is the summit among his plays of his economic knowledge. Founded squarely on the so-called dismal science, it revolves round money and the lack of money.

Is it a dull play, then? No: because in another sense it is a wrestling match between Shaw the economist and Shaw the dramatist, and fortunately for the theatre-goer the dramatist wins hands down. But unfortunately the dramatist wins this welcome victory only at the double cost of being misunderstood and of omitting the play's meaning. Only in the preface is this omission repaired. The play leaves only the imprint of a withering attack on the Salvation Army. It is of course intended to be nothing of the sort. Yet until the preface is read this wholly erroneous impression persists. And how many theatre-goers can be bothered to read a preface?

No doubt it was considerate of Shaw to pile the comparatively dull data of economics into his preface and not into his play, but there is something radically wrong about any play that gives an impression at once totally clear and totally unintended. The message of no play should require annotation. As a result, Shaw felt obliged to call his preface a First Aid to Critics, and (in 70,000 words) to explain therein the intention of his play.

Far from critically hostile, Shaw's attitude to General Booth's Army was particularly friendly. Indeed, from this friendliness the idea of Major Barbara directly grew. For the idea might never have entered Shaw's head had he not trounced in print someone who had written to the



This is the house I was born in - D. B. S.

Dublin, where Bernard Shaw was born and bred



Scene from the first production of John Bull's Other Island (London, 1904)



Scene from the first production of Fanny's First Play (London, 1911)

papers describing some orchestral performance as 'worse than a Salvation Army band.' The vigour of Shaw's reply drew from the delighted General an invitation to the Army's festival of massed bands. Shaw attended, wrote a professionally musical criticism, and then suggested that the Army's lads and lasses would do well to act little plays as well as sing and play in bands. From there it was but a short step to 'Why not a little play by me?' And from this, to Major Barbara.

(16) PASSION, POISON, AND PETRIFACTION: OR,
THE FATAL GAZOGENE

Written in 1905. First production by Cyril Maude and others at the Theatrical Garden Party, Regent's Park, London, on 14th July 1905. First American production (amateur) by the Associated Students of the University of California at the University's Little Theatre, Berkeley, California, on 19th March 1937.

Among the First Players.

Besides Cyril Maude; G. P. Huntley, Eric Lewis, Lennox Pawle, Nancy Price; and Irene (later Dame Irene) Vanbrugh.

'A brief Tragedy for Barns and Booths.'

G. B. S.

When Cyril Maude asked Shaw for something suitable for the theatrical profession's annual garden party in aid of The Actors' Orphanage, Shaw readily obliged. He resuscitated an idea he had used years before when inventing a story for William Archer's children about a cat that solidified through mistaking a bowl of plaster of Paris for a bowl of milk. The result was this burlesque tragedy, 'performed repeatedly with colossal success' during the afternoon, with the hero in place of the cat suffering the same, too, too solid fate.

(17) THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA

Written in 1906. First production by Vedrenne and Barker at the Royal Court Theatre, London, on 20th November 1906. First American production by Granville-Barker at Wallack's Theatre, New York, on 26th March 1915.

Among the First Players.

Granville-Barker played Dubedat; Lillah McCarthy, Jennifer; Ben Webster, Ridgeon; Lewis Casson, Danby; Eric Lewis, 'B. B.'; Clare Greet, Emmy; William Farren, Jr., Cullen; and Percy Marmont (later a star of the silent films), the Waiter.

In America Nicholas Hannen was Dubedat to Lillah McCarthy's Jennifer, other notables in the cast being Ian Maclaren (Ridgeon), O. P. Heggie ('B. B.'), and Ernest Cossart (the Newspaper Man).

'The Doctor's Dilemma was called a tragedy partly for the absurd reason that Archer challenged me to write a tragedy, and partly for the much better reason that its theme: that of "a man of genius who is not also a man of honor," is the most tragic of all themes to people who can understand its importance. Even the comedy which runs concurrently with it: a comedy of the medical profession as at present organized in England, is a tragic comedy, with death conducting the orchestra. Yet the play is funnier than most farces. The tragedy of Dubedat is not his death but his life; nevertheless his death, a purely poetic one, would once have seemed wholly incompatible with laughter. It takes place in the presence of the newspaper reporter, who is almost as ludicrous and farcical as such people are in real life; and the perfectly genuine and moving distress of B. B. is expressed by misquotations of Shakespeare in the manner of Huckleberry Finn.'

G. B. S., in a letter to Archibald Henderson.

Incidentally a subsidiary tragedy lies in the passage of those gorgeous Shakespearean misquotations clean over most of the heads in the audience, the majority of which remains at best gravely puzzled, or at worst quite incapable of connecting the misquotations, much less the true text from which they spring, with Shakespeare. It is their loss: they miss much Malapropian fun.

The Doctor's Dilemma is rich in portraits from real life. To mention two: those of the murderer and his victim. The former, Sir Colenso Ridgeon, is a portrait of Sir Almroth Wright in so far (but only in so far) as years before at St. Mary's Hospital, London, Shaw overheard Sir Almroth being landed in precisely the same dilemma as Ridgeon's in the play. As for the murdered Dubedat, Shaw took two of his traits, his habit of borrowing and his his contempt for wedlock, straight from Edward Aveling, the sexually attractive scamp who deserted his wife, and on

her death married another while simultaneously living in illicit union with one of Karl Marx's daughters.

Un-Dantesque, Shaw's plays are not peopled with the dead; un-Elizabethan, their curtains do not fall on a corpse-littered stage. Apart from *The Doctor's Dilemma*, none of the very few deaths in the whole Shavian drama is built up into a theatrical death scene. All are merely incidental. Thus in *Back to Methuselah* the Oracle strikes dead a pseudo-Napoleon: but who cares? It is significant of Shaw's fastidious avoidance of this subject that not the least poignant of these incidental deaths should be that of no human being but of an animal—the deer at the opening of *Back to Methuselah*. Only in *The Doctor's Dilemma* does Shaw give us a proper, and to some a very improper, death scene: the real thing, in full panoply: and then only after being goaded by Archer to do so. The scene was, is, and always will be a deathless and scandalous success. And the quotation chosen to head this play reveals the tremendous satisfaction with which Shaw deliberately punctuated and punctured the scene's poetical content and tragic possibilities with material for great gusts of laughter.

Critics have their uses. They stimulate those they challenge or annoy; and to Walkley and Archer the world is permanently indebted for goading Shaw to the point of writing plays: Man and Superman to stop Walkley's mouth, and *The Doctor's Dilemma* to stop Archer's.

(18) INTERLUDE AT THE PLAYHOUSE

Written in 1907. First and only performance by Cyril Maude at the Playhouse Theatre, London, on 28th January 1907.

The Players.

Cyril Maude and his wife Winifred Emery.

Shaw wrote this little duologue for Cyril Maude and his wife for the opening of the Playhouse after it had been rebuilt (in 1906 it had been partly demolished when some of Charing Cross station's domed roof fell on it).

He never published the Interlude, but the text can be found in the *Daily Mail* file for 29th January 1907, and in *Lest I Forget* (New York, 1928) by Cyril Maude.

(19) GETTING MARRIED

Written in 1908. First production by Vedrenne and Barker at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, London, on 12th May 1908. First American production by William Faversham at the Booth Theatre, New York, on 6th November 1916.

Among the First Players.

In England: Mary Rorke played Mrs. Bridgnorth; Holman Clark, Collins; Marie Löhr, Leo; Henry Ainley, Bishop of Chelsea; Robert Loraine, Hotchkiss; Auriol Lee, Edith; Fanny Brough, Mrs. Collins.

In America: Lumsden Hare played Bridgnorth; William Faversham, Bishop of Chelsea; Charles Cherry, Hotchkiss.

'There is no subject on which more dangerous nonsense is talked and thought than marriage.' G. B. S.

Shaw's contribution to the 'dangerous nonsense,' reinforced with a Preface of some 26,000 words, is *Getting Married*.

I remind myself occasionally that this book is for the general reader, and not for the specializing student. With this in mind, we can happily dismiss *Getting Married* with the reflection that presumably Shaw had to get it, or something like it, out of his system sometime, and the sooner the better.

Yet in a moment of relaxation the student may pick up a general reader's book. If he should pick up this one I add for his benefit that *Getting Married* is, among other things, an overlong non-stop exposition of how the English Marriage laws work, or fail to work, with observations (implicit in the play and explicit in the Preface) such as that the success of marriage chiefly depends, not on love, but on the economic independence of the parties concerned; that the mere desire for divorce should be considered sufficient grounds for granting it without question, if suitable provision were made for the children involved; and so on. For the rest, the student must plough through the tiresome thing itself: he will get no help from this quarter.

On account of its place in London's theatrical history, on the other hand, *Getting Married* is not without a certain grimmish interest. It was by no means an out-and-out failure, but its failure to draw the public helped to empty

Vedrenne and Barker's pockets and to land that management just short of bankruptcy. What had come over Shaw, Vedrenne, and Barker? Having burnt their boats at the Court Theatre, what hypnotized them into thinking *Getting Married* a suitable play to bring into the West End, and into the hallowed Haymarket of all theatres? Shaw had written the play in classical form: in revenge, had the old Greek gods overwhelmed him and his management with *hubris*?

(20) THE SHEWING-UP OF BLANCO POSNET

Written in 1909. First production by Lady Gregory and W. B. Yeats at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, on 25th August 1909. First English production by Lady Gregory and W. B. Yeats, in conjunction with the Stage Society, at the Aldwych Theatre, London, on 5th December 1909. First American production by Lady Gregory and W. B. Yeats at the Plymouth Theatre, Boston, Mass., on 5th October 1911, and at the Maxine Elliott Theatre, New York, on 23rd November 1911.

Among the First Players.

In Ireland, England, and America the play was cast from Dublin's Abbey Theatre Company, including Cathleen Nesbitt, Hannah; Una O'Connor, Jessie; Arthur Sinclair and J. A. O'Rourke, Daniels; Fred O'Donovan, Blanco; J. M. Kerrigan, Kemp; Sara Allgood, Feemy; and Maire O'Neill, The Woman.

'This little play is really a religious tract in dramatic form.'

G. B. S.

Those reluctant to class it among Plays Tiresome may regard *The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet* as the second major intimation, *Man and Superman* being the first, that Shaw's religious doubts were steadily fermenting. The gases at this stage of the fermentation, bottled and presented in the character of Blanco, were so noxious to the Censor that he declined to let them loose on the public or to license the play. So it came to be produced at the Abbey Theatre, beyond the Censor's reach, though not without a battle royal with British Authority at Dublin Castle. But produced it was—and in Horse Show week to boot!

The London Stage Society, to whose auspices Lady Gregory and Yeats transferred their Dublin production

lock, stock, and barrel, was of course a private society or club barred to the public. Over it the Censor therefore held no jurisdiction.

The *Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet* is the only play of Shaw's to be first produced in Ireland.

(21) PRESS CUTTINGS

Written in 1909. First production by the Civic and Dramatic Guild at the Royal Court Theatre, London, on 9th July 1909. First American production by and at the Toy Theatre, Boston, Mass., on 1st January 1912.

Among the First Players.

Robert Loraine and Leon Quartermaine played Mitchener and Balsquith respectively in England. In America, Samuel A. Eliot, Jr. and William C. Safford took these parts.

'A Topical Sketch Compiled from the Editorial and Correspondence Columns of the Daily Papers.' G. B. S.

More trouble with the Censor. This time it was because the names Balsquith and Mitchener too closely suggested the names of the real Balfour and Asquith, and of the real Milner and Kitchener.

The playlet is about suffragettes, and is on their side. This being so, the suffragettes indulged in a bout of their customary energy, and at once formed a private Guild—the Civic and Dramatic Guild—for the sole and *ad hoc* purpose of circumventing the Censor and producing the play. Later it was duly licensed, after Balsquith had been renamed Johnson; and Mitchener, Bones.

(22) THE FASCINATING FOUNDLING

Written in 1909. First production (amateur) by Princess Bibesco, daughter of the then British Prime Minister, H. H. Asquith. First professional production by the Arts Theatre Club at the Arts Theatre, London, on 28th January 1928. Not performed in America.

Among the First Players.

At the Arts Theatre the part of Anastasia was played by Peggy Ashcroft.

'A Disgrace to the Author.'

G. B. S.

This playlet was written for Elizabeth Asquith, Princess Bibesco, who acted it, according to Shaw, at least once, for charity, but when and where he could not recall. Nor, as far as could be discovered, could any one else. But presumably it served its charitable purpose.

(23) A GLIMPSE OF REALITY

Written in 1909. First production by the Glasgow Clarion Players at the Fellowship Hall, Glasgow, on 8th October 1927. First production by and at the Arts Theatre Club, London, on 20th November 1927. Not performed in America.

Among the First Players.

In London Harcourt Williams played Count Ferruccio; Elissa Landi, Giulia; and Terence O'Brien, Sandro.

'A Tragedietta.'

G. B. S.

Written for Granville-Barker, but never either played or produced by him, this little piece, grim for Shaw, remained among Shaw's papers, forgotten, until 1927.

(24) MISALLIANCE

Written in 1909-10. First production by Charles Frohman at the Duke of York's Theatre, London, on 23rd February 1910. First American production by William Faversham at the Broadhurst Theatre, New York, on 27th September 1917.

Among the First Players.

In England, Lena Ashwell played Lina; Miriam Lewes, Hypatia; and Donald Calthrop, Summerhays. In America, the Summerhays was Philip Leigh and the Hypatia, Elizabeth Risdon. Frederick Lloyd played John Tarleton in both countries.

'The London critics laughed heartily at my play, Misalliance, yet the next morning they informed the public they had suffered the weariest agonies of boredom simply because that is the customary thing to write about such plays.'

G. B. S.

The critics were right. They laughed, because even at his dullest Shaw ejects enough wit to make even a critic laugh; and they were bored, because a play in which human beings are supplanted by puppets floundering to illustrate an author's hypothesis, itself obscure, has all the makings

of a Tiresome Play. To that volume *Misalliance* belongs. Charles Frohman, the then doyen of American managers who was persuaded to experiment with high-brow repertory in London, found it ruinous as well as tiresome, wisely withdrawing it after three performances.

For the student let it be said that like its fellow bore, *Getting Married*, *Misalliance* is a non-stop exposition of Shavian theory: this time on the subject of eugenics. The argument implicit in the play is that we must make more eugenic rules if the race is not to deteriorate. Yet if we make too many, obedience to some of them may thwart the purpose of the Life Force. To avoid this, and to help the Life Force to attain its object, we must take care to allow the Force wide latitude in which to indulge what may seem to us freakish whims, for it moves in a mysterious way its wonders of evolution to perform. Enough?

(25) THE DARK LADY OF THE SONNETS

Written in 1910. First production by the Committee of Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, London, 24th November 1910. First American production by and at the Little Theatre, Duluth, Minn., on 17th November 1914.

Among the First Players.

Granville-Barker played Will Shakespeare; Suzanne Sheldon, Queen Elizabeth; and Mona Limerick, Mary Fitton. The American Queen Bess was Mrs. F. A. Patrick, formerly Kate Beneteau.

'The appeal for a national theatre with which the play concludes, and for the sake of which it was written, elicited applause but no subscriptions.'

G. B. S.

A pièce d'occasion, and something more than a *jeu d'esprit*. Prompted by Dame Edith Lyttelton, who suggested to Shaw a scene of jealousy between Queen Elizabeth and the Dark Lady with Shakespeare as its cause, *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* vies with *The Man of Destiny* as Shaw's most substantial and ambitious one-act play. It is not ephemeral, but scholarly; pleasant, too, and picturesque, and human. That it wears well was proved when it was revived with much success at the London Coliseum in 1923, with Haidée Wright, an actress of remarkable gifts, as

Good Queen Bess. Moreover, it will remain interesting long after it ceases to be topical; after, that is, England rides, if ever she does, the white elephant of a national theatre.

But perhaps the play's interest lies chiefly in its Preface. There Shaw performs several feats. First, generous as ever, he raises a memorial to Thomas Tyler, an old acquaintance from his British Museum reading-room days, as the originator of the theory identifying the Dark Lady with Mary Fitton. Secondly, he arraigns the cocksure Frank Harris, who fancied himself mightily as a Shakespearean interpreter, and deals that inflated monster a succession of critical blows. In doing so, Shaw, of course, is drawn to display his own virtuosity and his intimacy with the mind of the Bard; and it need hardly be said that in his hands William Shakespeare takes on a close likeness to Bernard Shaw. Thus because Shaw himself treasures and uses 'the jewels of unconsciously musical speech which common people utter and throw away every day,' his Shakespeare also is made 'a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles.' Indeed the surest way to make Shaw's Shakespeare in *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* a success on the stage, is to project him mentally as Bernard Shaw.

(26)

FANNY'S FIRST PLAY

Written in 1911. First production by Lillah McCarthy at the Little Theatre, London, on 19th April 1911. First American production by Sam and Lee Shubert at the Comedy Theatre, New York, on 16th September 1912.

Among the First Players.

Lillah McCarthy played Margaret Knox; Harcourt Williams, Count O'Dowda; Christine Silver, Fanny; Nigel (later Sir Nigel) Playfair, Bannel; Reginald Owen, Gunn; H. K. Ayloff, Juggins; Dorothy Minto, Dora; Cecily Hamilton, Mrs. Knox. The American cast included Elizabeth Risdon, Fanny; C. H. Croker-King, O'Dowda; Walter Kingsford, Trotter; Maurice Elvey, Vaughan; and Lionel Pape, Bannel.

'I hate to see dead people walking about: it is unnatural. And our respectable middle-class people are all as dead as mutton. Out of the mouth of Mrs. Knox I have delivered on them the judgment of her God.'

G. B. S.

The adverse criticisms showered on *Getting Married* and *Misalliance* caused Shaw to pretend to be persuaded that any play known to be his would be damned. Accordingly Fanny's First Play was announced and advertised throughout its run as the work of *XXXXXXX XXXX*. This transparency was pierced at once, of course, and Shaw acknowledged the play as his. Disarmingly he called it 'a pot-boiler'; but when any one else called it one he was careful to point out, as in a letter years later to Hesketh Pearson, that even his '*pot au feu* has some chunks of fresh meat in it.'

The prologue and epilogue are lampoons on contemporary dramatic critics. A. B. Walkley of *The Times* figures as Trotter; E. A. Baughan of *The Daily News* as Vaughan; and Gilbert Cannon of *The Star* as Gunn. The fourth figure of fun, Flawner Bannel, fitted, and for that matter fits still, any journalist masquerading as a critic and writing for the yellower press. These four studies are excellent evidence of Shaw's largeness of heart: he might so easily have been bitter and ill-tempered. Yet he is content to banter and bark. However mordant, his banter is not septic. Strikingly, too, these caricatures or skits hit off not only their originals, but critics of other days and doubtless of other countries as well; for Trotter and Company still amuse, and their dunderheaded points of view seem almost as sharply focused on the present as on the past. In short, though but sketches, they live.

As for the play within the play, Fanny wisely kept it simple, as *Candida* is simple, and improved on Shaw by cutting the cackle, much to the audiences' relief, and replacing argument with action. Therefore it plays well. It was not wholly due to low running costs that the original production scored over 600 performances, Shaw's record at that date for a single run.

(27) ANDROCLES AND THE LION

Written in 1912. First production by the Kleines Theater, Berlin, on 25th November 1912. First English production by Granville-Barker at the St. James's Theatre, London, on 1st September 1913. First American production by Granville-Barker at Wallack's Theatre, New York, on 27th January 1915.

Among the First Players.

Lillah McCarthy played Lavinia; Leon Quartermaine, the Emperor; Ben Webster, the Captain; O. P. Heggie, Androcles; Edward Sillward, the Lion; Donald Calthrop, Lentulus; Hesketh Pearson (to become one of Shaw's biographers), Metellus; Alfred Brydone, Ferrovius; H. O. Nicholson, the Centurion; Allan Jeayes, the Secutor; John Turnbull, the Retiarius; Baliol Holloway, the Menagerie Keeper; and Clare Greet, Megaera.

'The author of Androcles and the Lion received one of the worst shocks of his life when an American editor published its text under the heading, "A Comedy." It is not a comedy: it is precisely what the author calls it, A Fable Play: that is, an entertainment for children on an old story from the children's books, which nevertheless contains matter for the most mature wisdom to ponder.'—G. B. S. in A Note to Androcles and the Lion written for the New York production.

This is the play one might have got had one asked Shaw for a Christmas pantomime. He would doubtless have argued most reasonably that Christmas should be associated with Christians rather than with red-nosed dames and female heroes in tights, and quite likely would have maintained that the only Christians were the early Christians. With these, therefore, he peoples his pantomime, and, Christmas being a festival, ends it with their festive deliverance from martyrdom.

If this supposition seems far-fetched—a theatrical manager intelligent enough to ask Shaw for a pantomime would be the rarest of beasts—it is no more far-fetched or fantastic than the play itself, which is in its treatment an unexcelled example of Shaw's lifelong method of approaching the public. It is a method divisible into two parts: first there is the attempt to discover the truth; second, the telling of it with the utmost levity and, if possible, as a joke. Indeed the deeper the truth, the more outrageous the levity and the bigger the joke to match it.

Whether this way of trying to ensure a hearing for the truth is the right way or the wrong; whether, as Tolstoy told Shaw several times, it defeats its object more often than attains it, is debatable. But what is not debatable is the evidence in Androcles and the Lion of profound

reflection. It is a meaty play. Moreover, the meat keeps. 'My martyrs,' Shaw says, 'are the martyrs of all time, and my persecutors the persecutors of all time.' And he says truly, because he has represented one of the Roman persecutions of the early Christians, 'not as the conflict of a false theology with a true, but as what all such persecutions essentially are: an attempt to suppress a propaganda that seemed to threaten the interests involved in the established law and order, organized and maintained in the name of religion and justice by politicians who are pure opportunist Have-and-Holders.'

Further witness to the play's abiding substance is to be found in its preface, Shaw's major essay on Christ and Christianity.

In short, a pantomime if you will: but with it and in it, beneath its surface and alongside its fun, a play so serious of import that it might equally well have been elicited from Shaw by a request for a play entitled *De Profundis*.

(28)

OVERRULED

Written in 1912. First production by Charles Frohman at the Duke of York's Theatre, London, on 14th October 1912. First American production by and at the Toy Theatre, Boston, Mass., on 15th February 1915; and by Gertrude Kingston at the Maxine Elliott Theatre, New York, on 2nd February 1917.

Among the First Players.

In London the Lunnys were played by Claude King and Geraldine Olliffe, and the Junos by Adolphus Vane Tempest and Miriam Lewes. In Boston the Lunnys were played by Lumsden Hare and Gertrude Kingston. In New York Gertrude Kingston played Mrs. Juno.

'We are permitted to discuss in jest what we may not discuss in earnest. A serious comedy about sex is taboo: a farcical comedy is privileged.'

G. B. S.

Shaw may imply that *Overruled* is a farcical comedy; he also calls it a trifling experiment: but shorter words are bore and flop. With Pinero and Barrie as the other playwrights, it was Shaw's contribution to a West End triple



Gertrude Kingston in the first production of Great Catherine (London, 1913)



Harley Granville-Barker, Lillah McCarthy, and Bernard Shaw rehearsing

bill sponsored by Charles Frohman. On all three playlets the curtain mercifully fell.

The characters in Shaw's playlet are caught in what may be called a sexual situation; whereupon, contrary to convention and certainly to nature, but quite overruled by their creator's loquacity, they become analytical, calling spades spades. The trouble with the piece is that real people caught in *flagrante delicto* (or as nearly as makes no matter) do not talk brilliantly—about spades or anything else, and that any one attempting brilliance at such a juncture is asking to be socked on the jaw. In short, it is unreal. It would make a good curtain-raiser to Plays Tiresome.

(29)

PYGMALION

Written in 1912-13. First production by and at the Hofburg Theater, Vienna, on 16th October 1913. First English production by Sir Herbert Tree at His Majesty's Theatre, London, on 11th April 1914. First American production by Libler & Co. at the Park Theatre, New York, on 12th October 1914.

Among the First Players.

Mrs. Patrick Campbell played Eliza; Sir Herbert Tree, Higgins; and Philip Merivale, Pickering. Mrs. Campbell repeated her performance in New York.

'The reformer England needs to-day is an energetic phonetic enthusiast: that is why I have made such a one the hero of a popular play.'

G. B. S.

Perhaps Pygmalion can best be described as a lucky play. It is difficult to account fully for its success, for it is neither a perfect nor an extraordinary play. Yet its success was extraordinary and perfect; immediate, abiding, and universal; culminating a quarter of a century later in Shaw's first successful film.

It is customary to attribute much of its success to Mrs. Patrick Campbell: but the play first succeeded in Austria and in Germany without her, and it succeeds whenever and wherever it is acted whoever plays Eliza. Again, while the story, really that of Cinderella or The Ugly Duckling, is a 'success story' and therefore perennially popular, its threads are left so loose that Shaw had to tie them neatly

for the public in an explanatory postscript at the end of the printed play: notwithstanding, it succeeds. Yet again, much of the play's London furore centred round 'Not bloody likely' as being the limit of verbal licence on the stage, if not beyond it: but the play was equally successful in America where the word *Bloody* is scarcely a swear-word, being used as such chiefly to caricature the speech of the monocled British.

Then, too, Shaw himself rates the piece no higher than a good advertisement for phonetics. An amateur phonetician himself, Shaw drew upon certain intractable but amusing characteristics of Henry Sweet, a professional phonetician from Oxford, for the character of Higgins. And here, perhaps, lies the source of *Pygmalion's* success: its absence of preaching. No sermon, the play tells a simple old story in a stylish, fresh modern way, through characters who are human beings first and Shavian puppets second. The voice of the preacher is silent. And the silence was golden enough to bring *Tree* £13,000 in three months in London alone. In short, Shaw at last had written what his critics doubted his ability to write: a West End commercial winner.

Perhaps the truth is that certain plays, like certain people, possess what on the stage and in the films is called star quality. What constitutes star quality no one knows: certainly not perfection. Is it a lucky combination of characteristics and circumstances? Perhaps—but how command that fortuitous combination? Is it a brew, as it were, of just the right ingredients in just their right proportions? Probably—but how assemble those ingredients, how measure those proportions? Is it personality? Yes—but what is personality? Again, no one knows: we cannot define it. All we can say for certain is that when star quality is present we sense it. It is present in *Pygmalion*.

(30)

GREAT CATHERINE

Written in 1913. First production by Norman McKinnel at the Vaudeville Theatre, London, on 18th November 1913. First American production by and at the Toy Theatre, Boston, Mass.,

on 18th February 1915; and by and at the Neighbourhood Playhouse, New York, on 14th November 1916.

Among the First Players.

Gertrude Kingston played Catherine; Miriam Lewes, Varinka; Norman McKinnel, Patiomkin; Edmund Breon, Edstaston; and Dorothy Massingham, Claire. In America Gertrude Kingston repeated her performance as the Empress, and among her courtiers were Erskine Sanford and Albert J. Carroll.

'Exception has been taken to the title of this seeming tomfoolery on the ground that the Catherine it represents is not Great Catherine, but the Catherine whose gallantries provide some of the lightest pages of modern history. Great Catherine, it is said, was the Catherine whose diplomacy, whose campaigns and conquests, whose plans of Liberal reform, whose correspondence with Grimm and Voltaire enabled her to cut such a magnificent figure in the eighteenth century. In reply, I can only confess that Catherine's diplomacy and her conquests do not interest me.'

G. B. S.

Not, in short, a historical play. Rather, a bravura piece written for Gertrude Kingston, whom Shaw had recommended to play queens. He then discovered that in the modern drama there were no queens, while in the older there were none worth playing. So, to make his advice acceptable, Shaw wrote Great Catherine, remarking that no other queen could stand up to the joint talents of Gertrude Kingston and Bernard Shaw.

(31)

THE MUSIC CURE

Written in 1913. First production by Kenelm Foss at the Little Theatre, London, on 28th January 1914. Not performed in America.

Among the First Players.

William Armstrong and Madge McIntosh played Lord Reginald and Strega respectively.

'A Piece of Utter Nonsense.'

G. B. S.

Written to celebrate, and performed as a curtain-raiser to, the hundredth performance of Magic, G. K. Chesterton's delightful and only play.

As a journalist, Chesterton had been indefatigable in denouncing certain ministers of the Crown for alleged

improper dealings in shares of the Marconi Company. The Music Cure's ministers and Macroni Company are skits upon what was known as the Marconi Scandal, at the time a painfully real affair.

(32) O'FLAHERTY, V.C.

Written in 1916. First production (amateur) by a unit of the British Army at Trazegnies, Belgium, on the Allied Western Front, in February 1917. First professional production by Deborah Bierne at the 39th Street Theatre, New York, on 21st June 1920. First English production by the Stage Society at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, London, on 19th December 1920.

Among the First Players.

O'Flaherty was played by P. J. Kelly in New York and by Arthur Sinclair in London.

'A Recruiting Pamphlet.'

G. B. S.

The idea used here by Shaw—that of persuading illiterate Irishmen to enlist by telling them the enemy was not Germany but England—is not so far-fetched as it sounds. For when the father of Michael O'Leary, V.C., was asked to make a speech to the villagers he rose to the occasion, so the story goes, by telling them he was mighty glad to think that his son was in the war knocking hell out of those English.

That English soldiers should be the first to produce, attend, and enjoy such a play, and in wartime, testifies to that peculiar humour, half objective detachment and half superficial self-depreciation, that makes the English incomprehensible to other peoples.

(33) THE INCA OF PERUSALEM

Written in 1916. First production by Barry Jackson at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre on 7th October 1916. First London production by the Pioneer Players at the Criterion Theatre on 17th December 1917. First American production by Gertrude Kingston at the Neighbourhood Playhouse, New York, on 14th November 1916.

Among the First Players.

Randle Ayrton played the Inca; Gertrude Kingston, Ermyntre; Alfred Drayton, the Hotel Manager; and Nigel (later Sir Nigel) Playfair, the Waiter. Gertrude Kingston appeared as Ermyntre also in New York.

'An almost Historical Comedietta.'

G. B. S.

The Inca is an insignificant derisory sketch of the German Kaiser during the first world war.

Though compounded largely of impotent bombast, the All-Highest Wilhelm II nevertheless provided thinkers of those days with a dummy to wrap their thoughts around; and we find Shaw, also in 1916, writing a short story called *The Emperor and the Little Girl* for a Belgian war charity for children, the *Vestiaire Marie-José*. Free from flippant satire, this beautiful, even moving, little story comes strangely from Shaw. Barrie, one feels, might have written it had he ever experienced an unsweetened moment. The Inca of Perusalem on the other hand is pure Shaw, and probably the worse for it.

(34) AUGUSTUS DOES HIS BIT

Written in 1916. First production by the Stage Society at the Royal Court Theatre, London, on 21st January 1917. First American production (amateur) by the Drama League Players at Poli's Theatre, Washington, D.C., on 10th December 1917; first professional production by John D. Williams at the Comedy Theatre, New York, on 12th March 1919.

Among the First Players.

Lalla Vandervelde played The Lady; F. B. J. Sharpe, Augustus; Charles Rock, Horatio. In New York these parts were played respectively by Merle Maddern, Herbert Druce, and Norman Trevor.

'A True-to-Life Farce.'

G. B. S.

No one, male or female, soldier or civilian, who has known of or suffered from the red tape, complacency, obstruction, and inefficiency to be found in all War Offices in wartime (and in most other Government branches too for that matter) will grudge this attack by Shaw with his coat off. On the contrary, all concerned will applaud loudly

and irreverently. War subjects all Government establishments, irrespective of country, to such sudden strain, swelling them with willing but untrained help, that their doors automatically open to inefficiency. This inefficiency does not necessarily, however, dislodge the efficiency already within: it works side by side with it. Making war is so great an undertaking that there is room for both. But there is drama only in the inefficiency, and comedy only in the stupidity, of officialdom. Its efficiency, hard work, and wisdom are taken for granted and left unsung. Augustus does His Bit, in short, is Shaw's court-martial of Colonel Blimp. So, after all, Shaw did His Bit.

(35) ANNAJANSKA, THE BOLSHEVIK EMPRESS

Written in 1917. First production by Lillah McCarthy at the London Coliseum on 21st January 1918. Not performed in America.

Among the First Players.

Lillah McCarthy played the Grand Duchess; Henry Miller, Schneidekind; Randle Ayrton, Strammfest.

'A Revolutionary Romancelet.'

G. B. S.

This bravura piece pokes fun at the conflict of loyalties engendered by the second 1917 Russian Revolution. The world has travelled far since 1917. Russia, then an Orientally-minded enigma, is still Orientally-minded; but as contact with the West forces her to lift her veil she ceases to be an enigma. This playlet bears no relation to anything revealed behind that veil, and was notable chiefly for enabling an actress of great presence and good looks to appear in a wonderful costume designed by Charles Ricketts, R.A.

CHAPTER X

HUNTING THE SHAW

THE first time I met Shaw was in 1928. I had just made arrangements with him and the New York Theatre Guild to present a repertoire of his plays across Canada each season, and had come to London to shake hands with him on the pact. I had been in Canada to settle the details of the first trans-continental tour, and the voyage home had been memorable for me, because we had passed through a field of icebergs and I had never seen an iceberg before. My appointment with the great man was rather an early one, and to have my wits about me when the time came I had bestirred myself betimes and gone to plunge into the stately swimming-pool at the Royal Automobile Club before breakfast. At that time of day the pool is dim and comparatively deserted. Still half asleep and still feeling the motion of the ship, I approached the water and was about to plunge when something made me stop. I rubbed my eyes. There, right in the middle of the pool floated a diminutive iceberg. Impossible! I rubbed my eyes again, recalling the extremely sober way in which I had spent the previous evening. It was still there. Then, standing no nonsense, I peered more intently across the darkish water and finally perceived, of course, that my iceberg was nothing else than Bernard Shaw's white beard, upturned and glistening even in that early morning gloom, the creature's remaining nine-tenths being submerged in the proper iceberg way. I watched, not seeming to. The observed of all observers seemed happy to be off duty, relieved at the absence of an audience. Slowly and easily he swam to the side and took out of the water the spare, upright body which had served him then for seventy-two years, and placed it carefully on dry land. Then it was that I began to perceive something of the meticulous method, the instinctive reasoning, which attaches even to his most ordinary and casual actions. He did not go at once to his cubicle. Instead, it was as if he were saying: 'Why wet my very

small cubicle more than I need; what are hands for; why not combine the process of drying with the performance of one's daily dozen?' This may sound like a case of finding in Shaw only what we bring to him pushed to an absurd extreme, but the fact remains that there he stood, towelless, brushing and flicking the water from his limbs methodically, symmetrically, and even artistically, first from his ankles, bending down to reach them, then from his calves, and so upwards, from thighs, body, arms, beard, ending, if I remember rightly, with a final flick to his eyebrows. Then he retired from view.

Even so, I do not know Bernard Shaw particularly well. That is to say, I am not in his confidence. But I do not think this necessarily a disadvantage. Indeed, it may be all to the good, for I see no reason why even Bernard Shaw should know Bernard Shaw particularly well. He is too close to him, too used to him, to see him objectively. Though Shaw's eyesight has always been phenomenally good; so good, indeed, that when an ophthalmic surgeon tested his eyes he told Shaw that he was of no professional interest to him whatsoever, because his eyesight, unlike that of ninety per cent of the population, was perfectly normal; yet even perfect eyes cannot look into themselves. And so, if in spite of this we still want to play at Hunt the Shaw and run our quarry to earth, a metaphor, by the way, not at all to the Shavian taste, we had better assume, as with other men, that the works proclaim the man. Then the procedure is clear: see his plays and films, and read his prefaces and books. The box-offices and the bookshops are open, both of them willing to take your money. Here, then, in wide country where the trails are many and the scents cross, are some warning signs and arrows of direction on some of the trees in the jungle of Shaviana.

In the first place, do not let us look for the whole of the real Shaw in any single character of his plays, but rather for fragments or flashes of him in almost every character. 'As a dramatist,' he tells us, 'I have no clue to any historical or other personage save that part of him which is also myself.' And he adds: 'The man who writes about himself and his own time is the only man who writes about all

people and about all time.' If you come across a character who seems to fit Bernard Shaw like a glove, be wary of your find. For instance, you might think you had spotted Shaw in Larry Doyle of John Bull's Other Island. What simpler? Irish, the son of a small land-agent, Larry was discontented in Ireland: so was Shaw. Larry went to England and made a success there: so did Shaw. In fact, the likeness is so true, as far as it goes, that when Shaw describes Larry in the preface to the play as possessing 'the freedom from illusion, the power of facing facts, the nervous industry, the sharpened wits, the sensitive pride of the imaginative man who has fought his way up through social persecution and poverty,' unbeknown to the reader I took the liberty of lifting the description bodily from Larry Doyle and applied it to Bernard Shaw in the fourth chapter, recognizing in it an authentic piece of self-portraiture. But if Shaw is Larry Doyle, who is Peter Keegan? For Keegan and Larry are always at loggerheads, yet without a shadow of doubt Father Keegan is many times the mouthpiece of the real Shaw. Shaw, for example, has no use for cut flowers, and we find Peter Keegan admonishing Nora: 'Don't pluck that little flower: if it was a baby you wouldn't want to pull its head off and stick it in a vase of water to look at.' Remember, too, that Keegan talks more than any one else at the end of the play and bows himself out with the last word of the argument; a Shavian life habit.

In the gallery of Shaw's characters Keegan stands a little apart from the others. What distinguishes him from them? The possession of a heart, I think. Of all the Shavian creations this one-time priest, unfrocked for being a little too wise for the liking of those about him, seems the one most capable of human feeling. His heart is warm and his sympathies wide. He is perhaps Shaw's noblest creation; certainly his most lovable. It almost seems as if Ireland, on which Shaw had turned his back so finally and curtly more than a quarter of a century before, was not to be denied after all. There is a nostalgia in Keegan, and all the tenderness we miss in Shaw wells up in him. If Shaw seems to lack roots, or love of his native land, or simplicity, or warmth, one likes to believe that it is not so much that

he is a stranger to these things, as that he has given them into Father Keegan's keeping, because he feels they will bloom more sweetly in the Land of the Saints. Keegan is a dream of what Shaw would wish to have been if he had remained in Ireland. If Shaw answered that in that event the dream would be a nightmare, he would provide one more proof that his heart will always escape us unless we look for it in Peter Keegan's bosom.

Just as the more superficial points of a Larry Doyle may prove false scents, so, conversely, our quarry may be tracked sometimes to the most unexpected lairs. For instance, who would expect to find the real Shaw speaking through the mouth of Don Juan? Yet in *Man and Superman* he does so at some length, and the sensuous lips of the sixteenth-century libertine utter fervent expositions of Bernard Shaw's philosophical convictions. For instance: 'My brain labours at a knowledge which does nothing for me personally but make my body bitter to me and my decay and death a calamity. Were I not possessed with a purpose beyond my own, I had better be a ploughman than a philosopher; for the ploughman lives as long as the philosopher, eats more, sleeps better, and rejoices in the wife of his bosom with less misgiving.' Again: 'I tell you that as long as I can conceive something better than myself I cannot be easy unless I am striving to bring it into existence or clearing the way for it. That is the law of my life.' These two passages form part of a conversation occupying more than forty pages of small print, although it may be said in extenuation that the scene takes place in hell, where time, as we know it, is non-existent. All the same, Don Juan surely must have needed a little time in which to cool his passions and acquire his Shavian intellectuality. Whether such dialogue is dramatic, or such scenes drama, is of course a matter of opinion. Personally, I am satisfied with a very easy test: I go and count the box-office receipts. If Shaw had had to go the rounds of the commercial managers with his cap in one hand and the Hell Scene in the other, expecting them to produce it, they would have told him that no audience would stand for it, because, like Polonius's beard, it was too long: but they would have left out Polonius's

beard. Actually, audiences do stand for it. They do so partly, no doubt, for the fascination that any feat of sheer endurance holds for the spectator, such as pole-squatting or hunger-striking. But whatever the reasons, it is a fact that whenever the Hell Scene is produced the box-office is markedly lively. I therefore declare it drama. It is a music drama for four voices; tenor, soprano, baritone, and bass.

Shaw has never been anxious to avoid long speeches in his plays: on the contrary, he feels that they keep his plays in the classical tradition of Sophocles and Molière and Shakespeare. Besides, he can write them superlatively well. But to return to Hunt the Shaw.

In all those works, particularly the plays and prefaces, where Shaw allows himself plenty of elbow room for discussion, his readiness to admit the strength of views differing from his own is very noticeable. If we deduce from this that he is not only a good debater, as willing to receive as to give, but a good listener, we shall be right: he is a very good listener.

In the plays, then, where differing views abound, which are Shaw's? Here is a tip. Watch those characters whom other characters think mad. More than likely the real Shaw is lurking in the very words that caused their speaker to be called mad. We shall find the word mad applied to any one who drops bombs of shattering common sense into situations made supposedly bombproof by a blind observance of the social conventions. The epithet is also applied equally to any one who, in suggesting a remedy, thinks only of the benefit of its result instead of the propriety of its application; and to any one who, perceiving an unpalatable truth, speaks it out, instead of tucking it away behind his old school tie and pretending it isn't there. Such people society simply cannot afford to recognize as sane. Common sense and truth are among the first awkward things to be smothered in the layers of cotton wool in which man has become wrapped so comfortably; so that the average person, suddenly compelled to face these strangers, finds that he cannot look them in the eye, and so denies them. In short, the truth-monger must be called mad lest he embarrass society,

and the man foolish enough to act on his truthmongering must be put away ruthlessly lest he wreck society.

This being so, and as all Shaw's important plays are concerned with truthmongers and their activities, the number of people in them called mad is not surprising. To begin with, there is Joan. Because she would not deny the truth that came to her through her Voices she embarrassed society, and because she acted on that truth with startling effect she was duly put out of society's way. Shaw sees to it, therefore, that she is called mad by nearly every important person in his play. In John Bull's Other Island it is of course Peter Keegan whose wisdom is called madness, and the villagers, the better to withstand the force of that wisdom, confirm their opinion by building up legends of craziness, until the defeated saint, thrown back for company on beasts and birds, flowers and grasshoppers, sometimes wonders whether the villagers are not right after all. In the same play even Tom Broadbent, the jolly, steam-rolling Englishman with no nonsense about him, is thought by Larry Doyle's father to be 'not quite right in his head,' because he wants to introduce a little hygienic comfort into the pig-littered village that was good enough for old Doyle and his father before him. In *Candida*, an epic of home-truth-telling, four of the six characters are called mad in the course of the play; while in the play about *The Unexpected Isles* the person who most surely escapes liquidation on the Day of Judgment is its hero, and he is appropriately called *The Simpleton*. Probably Shaw's own attitude towards these pet madmen of his is best summed up in *Saint Joan* when de Poulengey, urging that the Maid be sent to the Dauphin, exclaims: 'We want a few mad people now. See where the sane ones have landed us!'

Another tip. Sometimes a Shaw play contains a character who fulfils the function of a Greek Chorus, by commenting on the action; and, since the play is by Shaw, upon a number of other things as well. This character is generally old enough to have retired from the hurly-burly of life, and therefore plays a minor part in the play, although sometimes, as in the case of Captain Shotover in *Heartbreak House*, it is the centre piece. The one I am thinking of at the

moment is Sir Patrick Cullen in *The Doctor's Dilemma*. Retired from medical practice years before the curtain rises, Paddy Cullen can leave the consumptive rascal-artist Dubedat in his colleagues' hands, and sit back, full of wise saws and ancient instances, echoing Shaw. In a later chapter we shall become better acquainted with the Shavian view of punishment and criminals and with the Shavian amendments to the criminal law; but any one with the barest knowledge of these will recognize that Paddy speaks with his master's voice in the following dialogue. He is trying to dissuade 'B. B.' from considering any idea of handing Dubedat over to the police for bigamy.

B. B. But is he to be allowed to defy the criminal law of the land?

SIR PATRICK. The criminal law is no use to decent people. It only helps blackguards to blackmail their families. What are we family doctors doing half our time but conspiring with the family solicitors to keep some rascal out of jail and some family out of disgrace?

B. B. But at least it will punish him.

SIR PATRICK. Oh, yes: it'll punish him. It'll punish not only him but everybody connected with him, innocent and guilty alike. It'll throw his board and lodging on our rates and taxes for a couple of years, and then turn him loose on us a more dangerous blackguard than ever. It'll put the girl in prison and ruin her: it'll lay his wife's life waste. You may put the criminal law out of your head once for all: it's only fit for fools and savages.

Again, when a few days later Louis Dubedat dies on the stage of galloping consumption, and the ineffable 'B. B.,' brimming over with emotion, proceeds to misquote Shakespeare over his dead body, Sir Patrick cuts him short by saying: 'When you're as old as I am, you'll know that it matters very little how a man dies. What matters is, how he lives. Every fool that runs his nose against a bullet is a hero nowadays, because he dies for his country. Why don't he live for it to some purpose?' That is pure Shaw. In its passion for life and purpose, in its absence of heroics and flim-flam, it is Shaw at his best and shortest.

When people arraign Bernard Shaw for lack of patriotism they should be referred to that remarkable passage. If they find no patriotism in it, then their patriotism is not Shaw's. For his is there, sure enough, but it is of a kind

so rare as almost to require a different name. It is a patriotism that must be strong enough to operate without the help of flags or banners or the blare of bands. On the 364 dull, prosaic days, when the drums and fifes are stored away and the kings keep within doors, it must continue active and pulsating in the hearts of men. The drudgery of it, the thankless, difficult, ceaseless drudgery! The tragedy of the twentieth century so far is, that only in times of war or rumours of war do men feel themselves members one of another. War uncovers a purpose and reveals a comradeship; but Peace hides her meaning, and we go about like strangers. If only we could invest our black hats and white collars with some of the magic we used to find in khaki and service blue! For Peace, too, hath her fights and her patriotisms; and none has fought longer or more tenaciously against those ancient enemies, poverty and ignorance, than Bernard Shaw. These are universal enemies knowing no boundaries. Shaw's sympathies, therefore, cold but not calculating, intellectual but not academic, overflow mere geographical frontiers, and in times of war between nations they are apt to embrace the opposite side as well, because he has the gift, fatal in a fight, for seeing the other fellow's point of view. To any narrower sympathy, any lesser understanding, or to mere tribal patriotism he will not willingly stoop. He revolts so strongly, indeed, from the cry of 'My country, right or wrong!' that many hear in his reproaches only the worse cry of 'My enemy's country, right or wrong!' When Edith Cavell was about to be shot, she spoke out to the world, and said: 'Patriotism is not enough.' Bernard Shaw knew what she meant. So did all of us. That is why we pretended not to hear. It was the least noble kind of patriotism that led to the omission of these flaming words from her statue in London outside St. Martin-in-the-Fields church; and justly, witheringly, Shaw thundered: 'For which omission, and the lie it implies, her countrymen will need Edith's intercession when they are themselves brought to judgment, if any heavenly power thinks such moral cowards capable of pleading to an intelligible indictment.'

I do not wish to imply that there is necessarily a Paddy



Maurice Colbourne as The Elder in Too True to be Good

Cullen in all the plays. By no means. These tips must be taken with wary circumspection. For instance, in *Too True to be Good*, there is an old geezer called The Elder who seems to spout the real Shaw every other time he opens his mouth. I once put the matter to a very practical test under the following circumstances.

My Guernseyman partner, Barry Jones, and I were committed to present *Too True to be Good* across Canada before we ever saw the play. When we did see it we decided that it was Shaw at his worst, which is about the same as other playwrights at their best. However, being supremely confident of our ability to better the work of the world's greatest living dramatist, we accepted the situation (as indeed we were bound to do by contract), and racked our brains how to counteract in our own production the poor reputation the play had gained both in London and New York, and which, unless we took drastic measures, would precede it across Canada. It was clear to us that it was the last act, the act in which The Elder appeared, which was chiefly responsible for the play's comparative failure. Obviously, then, something had to be done about The Elder. It was at this point that I suddenly recalled a curious afternoon I had spent in Minneapolis two years before, in 1930. I was in a broadcasting studio in my professional capacity of Theatre Guild Lecturer on Bernard Shaw (and other matters), when the radio was suddenly switched on, and to my intense pleasure I heard, coming all the way from the Savoy Hotel in London, England, that rich, Irish, musical voice with the twinkle in the tongue, proposing Einstein's health in one of the finest speeches I have heard in my life. Two years later I had forgotten all the details of the speech (except the bit about Einstein having confirmed by science what Hogarth had divined as an artist: namely, that 'the line of Nature is a curve'), but I remembered the gist of it sufficiently to realize that the things Shaw had talked about at the Savoy were precisely the things The Elder talked about in the play, equally brilliantly and at roughly equal length. As an argument between Kneller, the painter, and Newton, the philosopher, they were later to form one of the topics of *In Good King*

Charles's Golden Days, but naturally I did not know this at the time. The Elder therefore seemed a true piece of the real Bernard Shaw. It was true that none of the other characters called The Elder mad, but we discounted this omission by pointing out to each other that his madness was too obvious to be worth mentioning, since the perfectly respectable twentieth-century old gentleman lived in a cave and wore strange clothes. So I, who for my sins was due to play the part, took a new lease of life, and plucking up courage, dressed The Elder in a bright green cycling suit of Norfolk pattern and 1900 fashion, surmounting it with suitable whiskers and a manufactured nobility of forehead. Only the ears defeated me. But even this madcap contriving failed to save the play, and one can only say that Shaw's presence on the stage by proxy, so to speak, caused us less pecuniary loss than we would have sustained without him. It was worth it, however: especially in Montreal, whose most eminent critic, like William Archer before him, once in a theatre, was apt to nod. The applause which greeted the appearance of 'Bernard Shaw,' however, roused him from slumber, and he nearly had a fit. The knowledge that Bernard Shaw was at that precise moment at sea on a world cruise galvanized him into one livid moment of agonized life, and then he gave it up. He shut his eyes quickly, darkly murmuring something about having got 'em again, and returned to his slumbers. We had played *Too True to be Good* in San Francisco, and when the *S.S. Empress of Britain* a few weeks later put into that port with Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Shaw on board, one of the swarm of reporters confronted Shaw with a photograph of his impersonator, and asked him to autograph it. The pen was poised before Shaw, who took the matter in good part, saw through the hoax, and even went so far as to pay me the Shavian compliment by telling the reporter that I was 'mad as a hatter.' At the same time he made it clear that he was no more The Elder than he was any of his other characters.

Hunting for Shaw in the plays is a difficult pastime. The results are uncertain, and many a time the snark fades into a boojum. For this 'reasonable, patient, consistent, apologetic,

laborious person, with the temperament of a school-master and the pursuits of a vestryman' (as Shaw once described himself) possesses a divinatory power so piercing, an intellectual grasp so embracing, an understanding of his characters so sensitive, that in an argument he endows all of them impartially with equal strength. In this way, a keen sense of fairness runs through all his plays. When a character is speaking, Shaw, for the dramatic moment, is that character. That is to say, when he is writing words for his puppets to utter he gives each of them in turn one hundred per cent support, and their words and actions are those which he himself would want to say and do if he actually were those people in precisely their circumstances. At such moments the preacher and the artist and the debater are one. As a young man he used frequently to say things contrary to his real opinion, and apparently with the utmost conviction, simply to draw other people out and see what they would say. 'It develops one's muscles. Besides, one learns from it: a man never tells you anything until you contradict him.'

When people complain that Shaw mystifies them because they can never make out what he is driving at, I think it is this bewildering fair play of his that baffles them. When a round dozen of his characters expound divergent views and expound them so ably that each in turn seems unanswerably right, it is a little difficult to know which view, if any, is the author's. The only conclusion which people feel safe in coming to, is that, by a process of mutual cancellation, $0=0$. In *Getting Married*, for instance, which is nothing but a complicated non-stop debate in dramatic form, the various views of marriage are put forward so forcibly that they seem to cancel each other out, the monogamist winning at one moment, the apostle of free love at another, and so on. Similarly in *John Bull's Other Island*, Liberal and Conservative toss political views back and forth and end with honours even. I remember a performance of this play when the Royal Box was the scene of an uproarious disturbance, in the sense that the uproarious delight of the Liberal Lieutenant-Governor and the Conservative Prime Minister who sat in it was literally disturbing. 'How

do you like *that*?' His Honour would chuckle as Tom Broadbent hit a Liberal nail on the head. 'No more than you like *that*!' the Prime Minister would counter, nudging His Honour as another character on the stage drove home a Conservative nail: until these two, enjoying themselves hugely, ended by treating the scene as a ding-dong match of politics for which they were keeping the score. This, as in so many of the plays, seemed to be fifty-fifty.

The difficulty arising from Shaw's Olympian fair-mindedness disappears when we leave the Plays for the Prefaces. In these, a quarter of a million words long, the real Shaw reveals himself to those with the patience to seek him. There, free of censors, managers, actors, plots, and all the other limitations of the stage, he preaches before the world's bar sermons that may be described as sustained paroxysms of special pleading.

Besides reading the Prefaces, the really conscientious seeker after Shaw would have to walk abroad a little. Not far: but certainly as far as Kensington, whose respectability and imperviousness to anything new is well calculated to foster rebellion in the breasts of its less somnolent inhabitants. And also as far as St. Pancras, whose dingy purlieus, still dingier in the nineties, are a standing challenge to all healthy-minded citizens to abolish, not only them, but their inhabitants and the kind of civilization that made them possible, for ever; for if the searcher does not get more from poking his or her nose into a slum than from all the Das Kapitals and Blue Books ever printed, then for that person Bernard Shaw will always remain a closed book.

Then, too, even the smallest library of the Shavian student should contain at least the Bible, Shakespeare, Bunyan, and Shelley. And Samuel Butler.

Butler, Shaw describes as 'in his own department the greatest English writer of the latter half of the nineteenth century.' His influence on Shaw is incalculable. It was not so much that Butler influenced Shaw's mind or opinions, as that he helped him, by example, to look at those opinions in a particular kind of way. He did not reveal life to Shaw, but Shaw liked the kind of glasses through which Butler looked at life. In sounding the charge for a fresh attack

on society, Butler managed to sound a new note. In both him and Shaw the pursuit of knowledge by the method of combining scientific inquiry with natural intuition led to the heterodox conclusions of the born rebel. The mantle of the elder rebel fell easily on to the shoulders of the younger. There was a close kinship of spirit between the two men. Both were Victorian rebels, both professed a philosophy of life, both were imbued with curiosity and the spirit of scientific inquiry, and both were intensely musical. Their minds ran so parallel that each might have written the other's aphorisms. Who, for instance, would not suspect Shaw as the author of: 'The want of money is the root of all evil'; instead of, correctly, Butler? Their interests, too, were so wide that the writings expressing this tumult of interests would be hard to classify had not both men been compelled by the very heterogeneity of their material to devise a special literary receptacle to contain it: Butler devising the Notebooks for his vast mixed bag; and Shaw, the Prefaces, for his.

It is in philosophy, however, that Shaw owes his greatest debt to Butler. For it was Butler who raised the cry that the neo-Darwinians had 'banished Mind from the universe,' and Shaw who took it up and echoed it with all the might and moral passion in him. When for a long black moment Darwinism, shaking the throne of God, seemed to open up before men the dark void of chaos, there stretched across the void one steady unshaking hand. It was Butler's. Shaw, searching for God in the intellectual blackness, grasped it: and it saved him.

Thus, if any one is to stand godfather, philosophical as well as literary, to Bernard Shaw, no one has greater qualifications for the sinecure than the author of *Erewhon*, *Life and Habit*, *Evolution Old and New*, and *The Way of All Flesh*. In short, to play Hunt the Shaw successfully, first follow the Samuel Butler trail.

CHAPTER XI

THE PLAYS CONCLUDED

(36)

HEARTBREAK HOUSE

Written at intervals between 1913 and 1919. First production by the New York Theatre Guild at the Garrick Theatre, New York, on 10th November 1920. First English production by James Bernard Fagan at the Royal Court Theatre, London, on 18th October 1921.

Among the First Players.

In New York: Elizabeth Risdon played Ellie; Albert Perry, Shotover; Lucille Watson, Lady Utterword; Effie Shannon, Hesione; Fred Eric, Hushabye; Ralph Roeder, Utterword; Dudley Digges, Mangan; Erskine Sanford, Mazzini; Henry Travers, the Burglar; and Helen Westley, Nurse Guinness.

In London: Ellen O'Malley played Ellie; Brember Wills, Shotover; Edith (later Dame Edith) Evans, Lady Utterword; Mary Grey, Hesione; James Dale, Hushabye; Eric Maturin, Utterword; Alfred Clark, Mangan; H. O. Nicholson, Mazzini; and Charles Groves, the Burglar.

'Heartbreak House is not merely the name of the play which follows this preface. It is cultured, leisured Europe before the war. When the play was begun not a shot had been fired; and only the professional diplomatists and the very few amateurs whose hobby is foreign policy even knew that the guns were loaded. A Russian playwright, Tchekov, had produced four fascinating studies of Heartbreak House, of which three, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Uncle Vanya*, and *The Seagull*, had been performed in England. Tolstoy, in his *Fruits of Enlightenment*, had shown us through it in his most ferociously contemptuous manner. Tolstoy did not waste any sympathy on it: it was to him the house in which Europe was stifling its soul; and he knew that our utter enervation and futilization in that overheated drawing-room atmosphere was delivering the world over to the control of ignorant and soulless cunning and energy, with the frightful consequences which have now overtaken it.' Tolstoy was no pessimist: he was not disposed to leave the house standing if he could bring it down about the ears of its pretty and amiable voluptuaries; and he wielded the pickaxe with a will.' G. B. S.

Shaw, however, can never wield a pickaxe. His instrument is the bastinado, and in his version of Heartbreak

House he uses it with a vigour not even Tolstoy can out-match. But, bastinadoes not being pickaxes, the House still stands, unshaken. Only its inmates does Shaw shake, now with misgivings, now with laughter.

Heartbreak House, a fantasia in the Russian manner on English themes, was the first of Shaw's plays to owe its first appearance on any stage to the New York Theatre Guild; that is, to the adventurous leadership of the Guild's guiding spirits, Teresa Helburn and Lawrence Langner.

Though most of it was written in time of war, Heartbreak House is no war play. In one particular, however, Shaw was directly indebted to the war. Writing in the Tchekoffian manner one is in peril of the deep waters of a deft formlessness, of a whirlpool driving one not on and on but round and round with never a way out. Shaw, well out to sea and duly caught in the circling current of uneventful discursiveness, could not for the life of him think how to extricate himself, bring his ship into port, and his play to an end. Luckily, Count Zeppelin came to his rescue with a bomb dropped at Potters Bar a few miles from Shaw's home at Ayot St. Lawrence. This gave him the idea of ending his play with an explosion: hence its bomb.

True, the date (24th September 1915) of this famous incident—thanks to Lieutenant Robinson, V.C., the dirigible shortly followed its bombs and fell flaming to earth—suggests that the play should have been finished soon after, but its very plotlessness left it an easy prey to rewriting; and throughout the war Shaw was intermittently revising and touching it up. This is not characteristic of him. Usually, when one play was off the stocks it was good riddance and on with the next. Not so with Heartbreak House. Shaw was writing in an alien manner, for the Tchekoffian manner is not the Shavian manner: it is neither didactic nor uproarious; it employs neither the bastinado nor the sledgehammer; it is subtle, employing the gentlest of touches, the merest hints, and working in the lightest of shadings and shadows. This desired subtlety warned Shaw that his play was fragile and could easily come to bits in the wrong hands. He was curiously loth to part with it.

Had Tchekov never lived, Heartbreak House would

have taken a different shape: had that bomb not fallen or fallen farther off, it would have ended differently; and if Lena Ashwell had never told Shaw of a delightful character he felt he must dramatize, we would never have known that wise old crackpot, Shotover. What may not be grist to the playwright's mill? Through how small a chink the wind of inspiration can blow! You never can tell.

(37-41)

BACK TO METHUSELAH

Written in 1918-20. First production by the Theatre Guild of New York at the Garrick Theatre, New York, beginning on 27th February 1922. First English production by Barry Jackson at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, beginning on 9th October 1923. First London production by Barry Jackson at the Royal Court Theatre beginning on 18th February 1924.

Among the First Players.

In America, A. P. Kaye gave a remarkable impersonation of Lloyd George in the part of Joyce Burge, played in England by Leo Carroll. Also prominent in the large casts were Cedric Hardwicke (Haslam, the Archbishop and the He-Ancient), Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies (Eve and Amaryllis), Albert Bruning (the Elderly Gentleman), Scott Sunderland (Cain and Ozymandias), Colin Keith-Johnston (Adam and Pygmalion), and Margaret Chatwin (the Parlour Maid, Mrs. Lutestring, and Lilith's Ghost).

'I now find myself inspired to make a second legend of Creative Evolution without distractions and embellishments. I abandon the legend of Don Juan with its erotic associations, and go back to the legend of the Garden of Eden. I exploit the eternal interest of the philosopher's stone which enables men to live for ever. I am not, I hope, under more illusion than is humanly inevitable as to my contribution to the scriptures of Creative Evolution. It is my hope that a hundred parables by younger hands will soon leave mine as far behind as the religious pictures of the fifteenth century left behind the first attempts of the early Christians at iconography. In that hope I withdraw and ring up the curtain.'

G. B. S.

Back to Methuselah is a single work or cycle, consisting of five plays. These are In the Beginning (4004 B.C.); The Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas (A.D. 1920); The Thing Happens (A.D. 2170); Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman (A.D. 3000); and As Far as Thought Can Reach

(A.D. 31,920). All argument as to whether this pentalogy is one play or five was effectively settled by the Lord Chamberlain when without hesitation, upon Shaw's submission of a single play in eight acts, he charged the official fees for reading five plays. Here it will be appropriate to regard the work in its entirety only.

Shaw's first attempt (referred to by him above) to write a play about Creative Evolution was, of course, *Man and Superman*. But that play's tale of a husband-huntress so obscured the evolutionary doctrine that a second attempt became necessary. Back to *Methuselah* is that second attempt.

A thesis play, it dramatizes the thesis that our conduct is influenced not by our experience but by our expectations, and that life at present is not long enough to allow us to take it seriously. Much longer life is not only desirable: if the race is to survive, it is absolutely essential. For, so the argument runs, man as he is now is a failure and as such the Life Force will discard him: and without longer life a failure he will remain, because at present men wear out just when they are beginning to tire of their petty follies, ambitions, and weaknesses. They die, that is to say, just when ready to turn over a new leaf and lead lives acceptable to the Life Force.

Airily insubstantial as this thesis may sound, Archibald Henderson reminds us that it is not completely outside reality. He points out that during the first half of the twentieth century the actuarial expectation of life increased from about forty to about sixty, and adds that Metchnikov, Sir Ronald Ross, and other scientists have predicted that within a century the average expectation of life will be 150 years.

The mere currency of such opinions, right or wrong, helps to link *Back to Methuselah* to the practicalities of life; to keep it, so to speak, on the ground. For those who have never heard of Metchnikov or Sir Ronald Ross Shaw himself helps to keep the play on the ground, or at any rate inside the theatre, by weighting it with substantial portraits of two real live British ex-Prime Ministers, Asquith and Lloyd George. Both were alive when Shaw

put them into his parable and used them as he would have used ballast for a balloon. Not a whit disguised under the names of Lubin and Joyce Burge, they provide twenty stone of flesh and blood that help to keep the twenty tons of fantasy and gas from floating clean over the audience's heads and out through the theatre roof.

A. B. Walkley reproved Shaw for marring the artistic unity of his play by introducing living persons, but could not deny the play's tremendous effect upon its audiences. When the final curtain fell at Birmingham on the fourth and last evening of the cycle's first performance in England, and Shaw appeared on the stage, 'he was met,' Walkley recorded in *The Times*, 'by a shout very different from the ordinary gallery cheer—a short, sudden, involuntary outbreak of long-held emotion, such as we have never before heard in a theatre.'

That the work was produced in England at all was due to the artistic courage of Barry Jackson. The credit due to him can be measured against his knowledge of its financial failure in America the year before. Shaw was under no illusions about its commercial value. His first response to Barry Jackson's request for permission to stage it was to ask: 'Is your family provided for?' In the same sense he had written to the Theatre Guild in New York: 'A contract is unnecessary. It isn't likely that any other lunatics will want to produce it.'

How are we to judge of the excellence or otherwise of this 'metabiological pentateuch,' as Shaw subtitles *Back to Methuselah*? Here are some opinions and facts.

In his curtain speech Shaw described the fivefold piece as 'a play of an intensity I think unparalleled.' In 1945 it was published by the Oxford University Press as the five-hundredth volume of the *World's Classics* series, its appearance being timed to coincide with the celebration of Shaw's ninetieth birthday. The *Postscript* written for this occasion and entitled *After Twenty-five Years* begins as follows: 'One of the many summits in the mountain range of human self-conceit is the introduction by an author of his book as a *World Classic*. He cannot with any decency do it himself. And when he is invited to do so by a

publisher whose prestige has been won in serious literature, his gratified compliance must be in the vein of apology and explanation rather than a fanfare of brazen exultation.' And it concludes, after some six thousand entertaining and closely reasoned words: 'Back to Methuselah is a world classic or it is nothing.'

On the other hand it sends some to sleep, or keeps them from the theatre. But so, no doubt, would many another world classic. Arnold Bennett, for instance, wrote in his diary: 'I went to the 1st of the Shaw plays in the 1st cycle, but had to sleep. It was terrible. I think this is the general opinion. I wouldn't go to any more.' The fact is, every audience at every play must always be more than willing to meet the author half way. Bennett (whose opinion of Heartbreak House was much in the same vein) represents those who refuse to step an inch to meet Shaw.

Whether we 'like' Back to Methuselah is as immaterial as whether we 'like' The Nibelung's Ring. Against Shaw's and Wagner's massive accomplishments the puny darts of personal likes and dislikes fall innocuous. There are *longueurs* in Methuselah just as there are in The Ring: but in each there are also special glories to be found nowhere else. No personal opinion can do away with or detract from these, or lessen the sheer epic magnitude of the two works. I am stressing the Wagnerian parallel because the place of honour due to the Shavian work can be best assessed, perhaps, by saying that it did for the drama what Wagner's Ring did for music: each doing it by way of legend, Shaw taking the Garden of Eden lore and Wagner the pagan lore of the Nibelungs. Nor should it be forgotten that for no short while was Wagner abused as a master of cacophony. But his work survived abuse: and so may this work of Shaw's.

(42) JITTA'S ATONEMENT

Written in 1922. First production by Lee Shubert at the Comedy Theatre, New York, on 17th January 1923. First English production by Violet Vanbrugh at the Grand Theatre, Fulham, London, on 3rd February 1925.

Among the First Players.

Bertha Kalich and Violet Vanbrugh played Jitta, in America and England respectively.

(The original play, *Frau Gittas Sühne*, was first performed at Vienna's Burgtheater on 3rd February 1920.)

Frau Gittas Sühne is the work of Shaw's Austrian translator, Siegfried Trebitsch. In returning the compliment Shaw, no tragedian, turned what was almost tragic in the original into something, if not comic, at least comedic, in that he fitted his version with a happy ending. This he gaily contrived without a by-your-leave from Trebitsch, excusing the liberty taken with the assertion that 'in real life the consequences of conjugal infidelity are seldom either so serious as they are assumed to be in romantic tragedy or so trivial as in farcical comedy.' A title more in harmony with Shaw's version would be 'Jitta's Reconciliation.'

(43)

SAINT JOAN

Written in 1923. First production by the Theatre Guild of New York at the Garrick Theatre, New York, on 28th December 1923. First English production by Mary Moore and Sybil Thorndike at the New Theatre, London, on 26th March 1924.

Among the First Players.

Winifred Lenihan, who played the Maid in New York with her name still to make, was a young actress of determined personality: she left the stage on her marriage a year or so later. The New York production was probably all the better for containing no very prominent players.

Supporting Sybil Thorndike as the Maid in London, on the other hand, was a remarkable company including Ernest Thesiger, E. Lyall Swete, Lewis Casson, O. B. Clarence, Milton Rosmer, Lawrence Anderson, Kenneth Kent, and Raymond Massey.

'There are no villains in the piece. Crime, like disease, is not interesting: it is something to be done away with by general consent, and that is all about it. It is what men do at their best, with good intentions, and what normal men and women find that they must and will do in spite of their intentions, that really concern us. The rascally bishop and the cruel inquisitor of Mark Twain and Andrew Lang are as dull as pickpockets; and they reduce Joan to the level

of the even less interesting person whose pocket is picked. I have represented both of them as capable and eloquent exponents of *The Church Militant* and *The Church Litigant*, because only by doing so can I maintain my drama on the level of high tragedy and save it from becoming a mere police court sensation.' G. B. S.

At Sarah Bernhardt's funeral in 1923 the old grand-manner school of acting was also buried, just as William Archer's death the following year marked the passing of a particular school of dramatic criticism. Duse survived Bernhardt by only a year. In 1924, too, Anatole France died. These and other tenacious Victorians, hardy and grand, sere and yellow, fell, now one, now another, like leaves from the tree of life. Shaw was their contemporary; yet it was then, at the ripe age of sixty-seven, that he wrote his masterpiece.

Three years before, in 1920 or 489 years after being burnt, Joan of Arc had been canonized. The event impressed itself on Mrs. Shaw rather than on Shaw, for he had never been particularly interested in Joan: that is, he had read the chronicles of her trial and the reports of her rehabilitation, but none of the pile of books about her that had grown up around her with the centuries. When Shaw found himself in play-writing vein but at a loss for a subject, it was Mrs. Shaw who came to his rescue. Why not write a play about Joan of Arc? she suggested. So he did. It was as simple as that.

Considerable importance can be attached, I think, to the fact that what many consider the greatest play of the twentieth century, and some the greatest since Shakespeare, was written with no inspiration from the usual Shavian fires. No burning social wrong, no festering economic evil impelled him to write *Saint Joan*. No anger at any current cruelty, no devotion to creative evolution or other theory, no interest in phonetics or other science propelled him. The play was born neither of Socialism nor of any other ism, but simply of Mrs. Shaw's suggestion out of the blue. The Shavian stables are well filled with hobby-horses, but on this occasion Shaw rode none of them. Yet he won the stakes. How tempting, therefore, to speculate upon the many more splendid plays he might have written

if when writing them he had put his hobby-horses out to grass. Vain wondering!

Shaw's Joan is in fact anti-Shaw, for he makes her an instinctive anti-Socialist. To that Socialist and Communist god, the State, his Maid bends no knee. She has no use for it in either its secular or its ecclesiastical form; and when it dares to challenge her convinced private judgment, out comes her knife ready to slit whatever part of Leviathan's belly she finds herself next to and up against. Aware of this, Shaw dodges the issue twice: in the play by a well advised silence: and in its preface by explaining and excusing Joan's conduct as the work of the Life Force, and herself as a manifestation of the Force's tendency to choose vividly unorthodox people for its incarnations and progress. No doubt this explanation is the natural and proper one for a believer in creative evolution: but equally proper for ordinary mortals is the much shorter explanation that Joan, if she must be explained at all, was that *bête noire* of Socialism, an individualist. Supreme individualist and foe to the death of institutionalism, Shaw's Joan in the twentieth century would have been a Free Enterpriser and the first to crusade against the tyranny of bureaucratic planning. In short, on Shaw's own showing the anti-Socialist would claim the Maid for his own, content to leave her in the hands of Shaw the dramatist, but ready to fly to her rescue at the slightest sign of Shaw the politician raising a finger to her.

What Shaw does, and does incomparably, is to present the most notable warrior saint in the Christian Calendar in a triple role: as the first martyr to Protestantism; as an apostle of nationalism; and as a pioneer of realism in warfare. Luckily for Shaw, and luckier still for his play, Joan was never in love. A love affair might have tempted Shaw to present her in the further role of lover, which might have been disastrous because romantic love scenes invariably floor him.

As it is, Saint Joan is a model for all historical plays. It is not enough merely to write history for the theatre, however correctly and deftly telescoped: one must also interpret history, and do so in modern terms so that the interpretation



Scene from the first production of Back to Methuselah (New York, 1922)



Scene from the first production of Saint Joan (New York, 1923)



Barry Jones and Winifred Evans in Basil Dean's production of The Apple Cart (Germany, 1946)

is straightway clear to a modern audience. For it is only by making a play's characters more intelligible to each other than they would be in real life that they can be made intelligible to the audience. In *Saint Joan*, for instance, Cauchon, Lemaître, and Warwick between them have to expound not only the Church, the Inquisition, and Feudalism, about which they knew much, but Protestantism and Nationalism, about which they knew nothing. Accordingly Shaw says: 'The things I represent these three exponents of the drama as saying are the things they actually would have said if they had known what they were doing.' In other words, the chief art of historical drama is to make its characters speak more wisely than they know, without letting the audience suspect as much.

Saint Joan was a happy play in the same sense that sailors speak of 'a happy ship' when they mean that everything about her falls just so, and all is unaccountably, almost miraculously well. To begin with, Shaw found it the easiest of all his plays to write. Indeed he used to say that not he but Joan wrote it, and that all he had to do was to tailor her story for the stage. Then, he had no worries: the West End he had conquered a decade before, in 1914; the critics he had given up long before that; in London he had the ideal theatre for the play; and in New York he had the Theatre Guild, a management steeped in Shaw. Lastly there was Sybil Thorndike. The actress of his choice for the part of Joan, she was very different from the artists he had wanted (and sometimes secured) for his other plays. Nearly all of them, from Irving and Mansfield to Alexander and Tree, from Ellen Terry to Mrs. Patrick Campbell, had at one time or another either declined, jibbed at, or misinterpreted the plays and parts he had offered them. Not Sybil Thorndike. Far from shying at either play or part, she grasped both with both hands and with her whole mind, and thirstily imbibed her impersonation of the Maid direct from Shaw's own readings of the play.

Certainly for the present author (if he may intrude for a moment in his former role of actor) it was 'a happy play,' lit with the halo of success, and later with memories. One of Shaw's famous quips at the time came in answer to the

Theatre Guild's request for the play to be altered, so that its audiences could catch their last trains, for the curtain fell after 11.30. Playing Dunois nightly while trying to live on Long Island, and getting there only when I succeeded in catching the last train by the skin of my teeth, I was highly interested in the Guild's request. But Shaw only answered: Alter the trains.

Like a ferociously good-tempered Jove hurling thunderbolts for fun, or a secular Pope brandishing bulls with catches in them, Shaw shot many such sallies from his new eminence. The truth was that the play's religious theme and enormous success combined to subject Shaw to little short of universal homage, as a result of which he designated himself, not without cause, 'a sort of unofficial Bishop of Everywhere.' Saint Joan, in short, was the signal for a Shavian apotheosis.

(44)

THE APPLE CART

Written in 1929. First production by Arnold Szyfman at the Polish Theatre, Warsaw, on 14th June 1929. First English production by Sir Barry Jackson at the Malvern Festival on 19th August 1929. First London production by Sir Barry Jackson at the Queen's Theatre on 17th September 1929. First American production by the Theatre Guild of New York at the Martin Beck Theatre, New York, on 24th February 1930.

Among the First Players.

In the respective parts of Magnus and Orinthia: Cedric (later Sir Cedric) Hardwicke and Edith (later Dame Edith) Evans, in England; Tom Powers and Violet Kemble-Cooper, in America; and Barry Jones and Olive Reeves-Smith, in Canada. In England, Barbara Everest played Queen Jemima, and James Carew, Ellen Terry's widower, the American Ambassador.

'The comedic paradox of the situation is that the King wins, not by exercising his royal authority, but by threatening to resign it and go to the democratic poll.'

G. B. S.

After seven playless years, so far the longest gap in his play-writing career, a new play by this septuagenarian was a matter of uncommon interest. But since the only direction from the summit of Everest is downward, The Apple

Cart is necessarily a descent from Saint Joan. Indeed Shaw ranks it so far below as to describe it as 'a frightful bag of stage tricks, as old as Sophocles.' Maybe it is: it is not necessarily the worse for that. Indeed that may explain its liveliness and popularity.

King Magnus, who so nearly upsets the British constitutional and political apple cart, is made so adroit and likeable that many thought Shaw in his early old age was turning Royalist. They did not know their man.

The Interlude's knockabout of tickles and sprawls, by the way, is an authentic piece of autobiography. Shaw has assured us that at *Pygmalion* rehearsals Mrs. Patrick Campbell would frequently try to detain him, sometimes by force ('and she was a strong woman') for the sheer devilment of making him late for Charlotte, just as Orinthia exercises all her wiles to keep Magnus from Jemima. Boanerges, too, would not be quite the same character if John Burns have never lived.

The Apple Cart is a Benjamin in Shaw's large family of plays, and somehow always seemed to get preferential treatment. This, in the event, was always justified, for the play was successful everywhere. It was written to open the first Malvern Festival; in London it was Sir Barry Jackson's one solid financial success with Shaw; in Canada the Colbourne-Jones Company established several records with it; and in 1946 it was chosen by Basil Dean and Barry Jones as the play for E.N.S.A.'s grand finale for the allied troops in Europe. As such it was the first play performed in English by an English company to which the conquered Germans were admitted.

The Apple Cart was not new to Germany, of course, Max Reinhardt having produced it in 1930 under the title *Der Kaiser von America*; and Barry Jones recalls how Berlin's Theater des Westens was filled to standing room only with attentive serious-minded theatre-going Germans, many with treasured old copies of the play in their hands, comparing Dean's production with Reinhardt's and his own performance with Werner Krauss's after a lapse of sixteen nostalgic years. Barry Jones also recalls the working of the Russian mind, at once thorough and obtuse. The

Theater des Westens being under Russian command, The Apple Cart had to be submitted to the Russian censors. They found the seventeen-year-old play dangerously topical; and indeed it was. What was to be done with a prophetic playwright who seventeen years previously had made one of his 1962 characters say: 'Germany? I suppose you mean by Germany the chain of more or less Soviet Republics between the Ural Mountains and the North Sea'? The Russians had but one remedy for such prophetic indiscretions—cut them.

(45) THE KING AND THE DOCTORS

Published in Time and Tide, London, on 22nd February 1929.

'New methods of treating disease were discovered; but the doctors took so long to learn the old ones that they had no time for the new ones. Even the surgeons had to do without any manual training, and picked up their art as the father of a family picks up the art of carving a turkey. So instead of adopting the new methods, they excommunicated their practitioners and all their accomplices.'

G. B. S.

This pleasant trifle, subtitled *An Improbable Fiction*, is nothing more than a piece of journalism. As such, it is with some difficulty found a place in our catalogue. Admittedly it is not a play: technically, it is not even written in dramatic form. Notwithstanding, I include it on the following grounds. Its second half could be cast in dramatic form in less than half an hour by anybody without altering, deleting, or adding to a single word uttered by either Prince or Doctor. That done, the first half of the piece automatically becomes a typical Shavian preface. Moreover, we should be the poorer without it. By including it, I have filled the catalogue to bursting point perhaps: but that is all.

A tilt at the medical profession, *The King and the Doctors* was written when King George V lay seriously ill at Buckingham Palace with pleurisy. Shaw begs the King's medical advisers to go outside the 'Vatican' of their *materia medica*, even at the risk of 'excommunication,' and call in any one, homeopath, osteopath, American, Jew, radiation

blood-test expert, or any one else who might possibly effect the cure so patently beyond the powers of their own 'priesthood.'

The hand is clearly the hand of The Doctor's Dilemma, of whose first act this piece is a distant but delightful cousin. It ends—I transcribe it undramatized—as follows:

'Tell me,' said the Prince; 'what is the most up-to-date scientific treatment for my father?'

'I have already ordered it,' said the physician. 'And you will be glad to hear that it will involve no conflict on my part with my colleagues.'

'Splendid!' said the Prince. 'I will never forget this proof of your sympathy and devotion. What is the treatment?'

'The seaside,' said the physician.

'The seaside!' cried the Prince. 'You call that the latest! Why, it is what my great-grandmother would have recommended.'

'Yes,' said the physician; 'but not for the true scientific reason. She thought that the benefit arose from change of air.'

'Then what does it arise from?' said the Prince.

'That,' said the physician, 'is a professional secret which I can impart to you only under a solemn pledge that it shall go no further.'

'I give you my word of honor,' said the Prince.

The physician stooped to the Prince's ear, and whispered: 'It will get him away from the doctors.'

(46) TOO TRUE TO BE GOOD

Written in 1931. First production by the Theatre Guild of New York at the Colonial Theatre, Boston, Mass., on 29th February 1932, and subsequently at the Guild Theatre, New York, on 4th April 1932. First English production by Sir Barry Jackson at the Malvern Festival on 6th August 1932, and subsequently at the New Theatre, London, on 13th September 1932.

Among the First Players.

In America, the part of Sweetie was played by Beatrice Lillie and the part of Aubrey by Hugh Sinclair; in England, by Ellen Pollock and Sir Cedric Hardwicke respectively.

'My play is a story of three reckless young people who come into possession of, for the moment, unlimited riches, and set out to have a thoroughly good time with all the modern machinery of pleasure to aid them. The result is that they get nothing for their money but a multitude of worries and a maddening dissatisfaction.'

G. B. S.

So long as the Malvern Festival was devoted exclusively to a repertoire of Shavian plays, Shaw felt more or less obliged to keep its pot boiling with a new play yearly, whether he had the material for a good play or not. *Too True to be Good* is a sample of what Shaw could write when he had nothing to say, or nothing clear to say, or nothing worth saying. The result here is a welter of words; including incidentally 'bitch' in its offensive sense, used now by Shaw for the first time in a play. Yet, not of course unexpectedly, from all the verbiage and silly situations emerge some magnificent passages, and at least one brilliant characterization—Private Meek.

Meek was drawn from Lawrence of Arabia after he had declined honours and responsibility and become an aircraftman in the Royal Air Force. The character of The Elder, too, touches life, having a biographical contact with Dr. W. R. Inge, popularly known as the Gloomy Dean (of St. Paul's), whose intellectual fibre always impressed Shaw greatly.

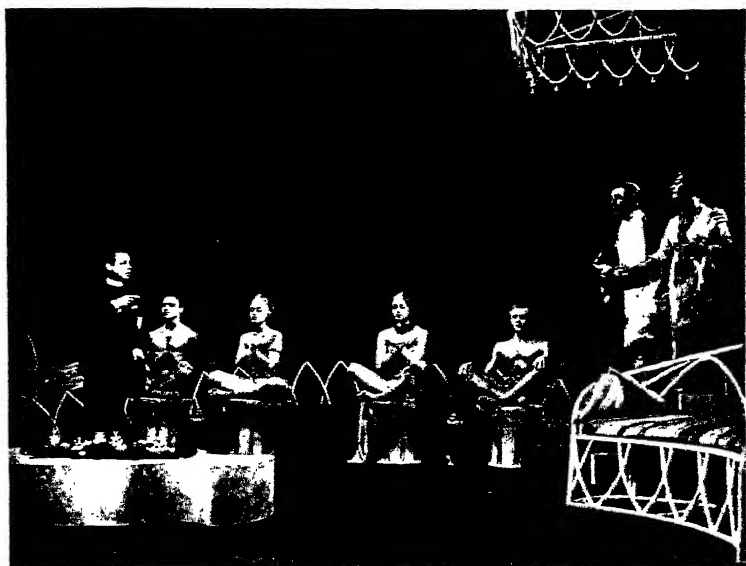
It is clear from *Too True to be Good* that the disappointments and disillusionments of the twenty-year *entr'acte* in the ghastly drama of world war were beginning to rattle Shaw, to get, as the saying goes, under his skin. And the more vehemently he denied this, as in the play's preface, the more likely it is to be true.

A felicity associated with the first production of this misfiring play was the monstrous pun perpetrated by the American critic, Alexander Woollcott. Beatrice Lillie, long prominent as a revue artist, had never played in a play before, and her engagement for the part of Sweetie by the Theatre Guild Woollcott described as 'not gilding the lily but Lillie-ing the Guild.'

(47)

A VILLAGE WOOING

Written in 1933. First production by and at the Little Theatre, Dallas, Texas, on 16th April 1934. First English production by Christopher Fry at the Pump Room, Tunbridge Wells, on 1st May 1934. First London production by the People's National Theatre at the Little Theatre on 18th June 1934.



*Scene from the first production of *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*
(New York, 1935)*



*Scene from the first production of *Too True to be Good* (Boston, Mass.,
1932)*

Among the First Players.

In London, Arthur Wontner played A, and Dame Sybil Thorn-dike, Z.

'A Comedietina for Two Voices.'

G. B. S.

In December 1932 Mr. and Mrs. Shaw began a voyage round the world on the Canadian Pacific Railway Company's steamship the *Empress of Britain*. Shaw dashed off this little play in the first month of the voyage, finishing it in the Sunda Strait in January 1933. For its scene aboard ship Shaw was obviously drawing on his own experiences and tribulations as a passenger on a 'luxury cruise.'

(48)

ON THE ROCKS

Written in 1933. First production by Charles Macdona at the Winter Garden Theatre, London, on 25th November 1933. First American production by the Federal Theatre Project (W.P.A.) at Daly's Theatre, New York, on 15th June 1938.

Among the First Players.

In London, the Prime Minister was played by Nicholas Hannen; and Lewis (later Sir Lewis) Casson, Laurence Hanray, Charles Carson, Walter Hudd, and Edward Rigby appeared in other prominent parts.

'The notion that persons should be safe from extermination as long as they do not commit wilful murder, or levy war against the Crown, or kidnap, or throw vitriol, is not only to limit social responsibility unnecessarily, and to privilege the large range of intolerable misconduct that lies outside them, but to divert attention from the essential justification for extermination, which is always incorrigible social incompatibility and nothing else.'

G. B. S.

On the Rocks is the kind of play you might write if, like Shaw in 1931, you had visited Russia and been impressed by a dictator's ability to get things done quickly by the simple process of cutting through red tape and disregarding tradition. That is to say, the play is an extravagant commentary on Western democratic forms of government. It focuses on a British Prime Minister so burdened with work and so bound with routine that he is left with neither the

energy to govern nor the leisure in which to think how to govern. It is, in short, an exaggeration.

In 1933 Hitler was still sowing his dragons' teeth, and had not as yet pushed dictatorial methods to their logical, bloody conclusion. Nor had Shaw yet realized that you can get anything done, in a way, provided you have power enough and weapons sharp enough. Nor did he realize, then or later, that when custom is cut through too unceremoniously and the past cut away too abruptly, the first result is a flow of human blood. Rivers of it. Or, if he did realize this, he becomes a monster; because his admiration of dictatorial methods is unstinted, and he advocates them, even unto death and extermination, without turning one of his silver hairs. Indeed the preface to *On the Rocks* is largely devoted to the subject of human extermination, or 'liquidation' as it became infamously known later in concentration camps under Fascist, Nazi, and Communist dictatorships. In Shaw's clean and clever hands, of course, liquidation performs the prettiest tricks and fulfils the nicest functions. Despite the essential and insufferable presumption implied in the power to liquidate, Shaw makes the horror work. It dances nimbly to his tune. He works it out, until the sin of Cain, magnified to the scale of masses and millions, appears utterly and sweetly reasonable. This is because he works it out, as he works out everything, only on paper.

(49) An untitled duologue. Written and published in 1933 as part of the preface to *On the Rocks*; but never, so far as is known, performed.

'I have been asked repeatedly to dramatize the Gospel story, mostly by admirers of my dramatization of the trial of St. Joan. But the trial of a dumb prisoner, at which the judge who puts the crucial question to him, remains unanswered, cannot be dramatized, unless the judge is to be the hero of the play.'

G. B. S.

For this reason Shaw never wrote a *Passion Play*. The duologue between Jesus and Pilate in the preface to *On the Rocks* is some indication of how he would have tackled such a play had historical facts not stood in his way.

Silence is not a Shavian characteristic, and its presence in others is apt to intrigue him. But not always, for when Hesketh Pearson suggested a Protestant play with William the Silent for hero, Shaw found the idea of 'William being Silent at the top of his voice for three and a half hours in a Shaw play' too topsy-turvy even for him and brushed it aside. The silence of Jesus at His trial, on the other hand, affected Shaw as the playing of an unresolved discord might affect a musician who, 'when he had gone to bed, heard somebody play an unresolved discord, and could not go to sleep until he had risen to play the resolution on his piano. What follows,' Shaw adds, 'is my attempt to resolve Pilate's discord.'

Since his attempt is not only nobly thoughtful, complete in its way, and not much shorter than many little one-act plays, but is written in dramatic form, it clearly deserves a place in the catalogue of his dramatic works and severance from a somewhat tiresome preface.

(50) THE SIMPLETON OF THE UNEXPECTED ISLES

Written in 1934. First production by the Theatre Guild of New York at the Guild Theatre, New York, on 18th February 1935. First English production by Sir Barry Jackson at the Malvern Festival on 29th July 1935.

Among the First Players.

At Malvern the cast included Godfrey Kenton, Arthur Ridley, Eileen Beldon, Derek Prentice, Cecil Trouncer, Vivienne Bennet, Elspeth Duxbury, Julian D'Albie, Stephen Murray, Donald Eccles, Norris Stayton, Curigwen Lewis, Elspeth March, and Richard Lonscale.

In New York the cast included Lionel Pape, Patricia Calvert, McKay Morris, Nazimova, Lawrence Grossmith, Romney Brent, Rita Vale, and Louis Hector.

'A Vision of Judgement.'

G. B. S.

This is Shaw's third attempt to dramatize Creative Evolution, and a comparatively unsuccessful one. He had done it all before, and better. Lacking the sustained bright vigour of *Man and Superman* and the length, depth, and occasional glories of *Back to Methuselah*, the play could be

aptly titled *Third Time Unlucky* and subtitled *A Repetition that Fails*.

As usual with Shaw, however, there are parts and passages which help to compensate for the boring repetitiousness of the whole. His treatment of the Day of Judgment, for instance, is brilliantly sustained, and not less amusing for its hard core of Shavian dogma. For at the Judgment, needless to say, no one is punished: those who (to use one of Shaw's stock phrases) have 'failed to pull their weight in the social boat' are simply and automatically liquidated into thin air; or rather out of all existence; and, of course, painlessly.

(51)

THE SIX OF CALAIS

Written in 1934. First production by Sydney Carroll at the Open Air Theatre, Regent's Park, London, on 17th July 1934. First American production by and at the Civic Theatre, Springfield, Ohio, on 27th January 1937.

Among the First Players.

In Regent's Park Phyllis Neilson-Terry played Queen Philippa, whose Court Ladies included Greer Garson.

'The Six of Calais is an acting piece and nothing else.'

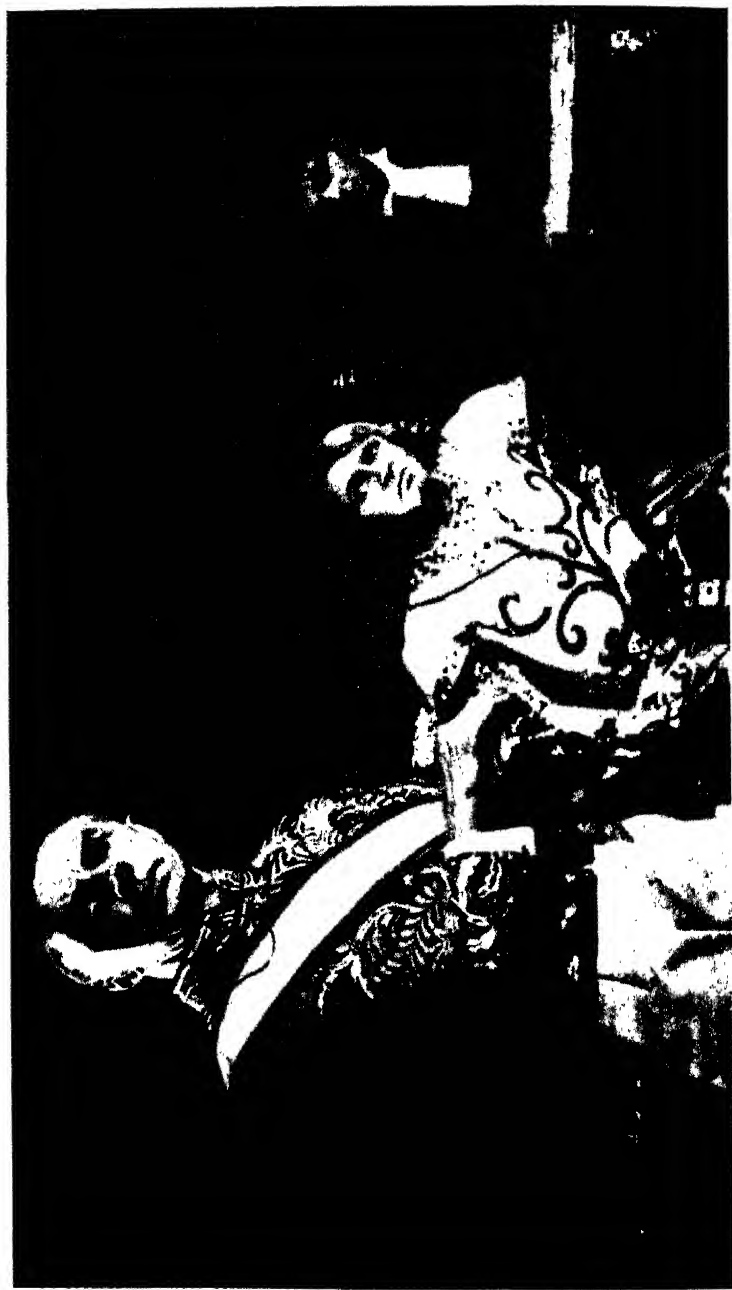
G. B. S.

Unfortunately, however, no one much wants to act it. The seed of this 'Medieval War Story by Jean Froissart, Auguste Rodin, and Bernard Shaw,' as the last-named calls it, was sown some twenty years before when Shaw passed through Calais on a motoring trip, and was greatly impressed by Rodin's sculpture of the town's six historical burghers.

(52)

THE MILLIONAIRESS

Written in 1935. First production by the Vienna Burgtheater at the Academy Theatre, Vienna, on 4th January 1936. First English production by Matthew Forsyth at the De la Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea, 17th November 1936. First London production by Jack de Leon at the Q Theatre on 29th May 1944. First American production by Lawrence Langner and Armina Marshall at the Country Playhouse, Westport, Connecticut, on 15th August, 1938.



Geneva—Sir Orpheus Midlander (Ernest Thesiger): Herr Battler (Walter Hudd): The Judge (Clement McCallin)

Among the First Players.

Jane Bacon played the title-role at Bexhill and Phyllis Neilson-Terry in London, where the cast included Raymond Lovell (Blenderband) and Frederick Valk (the Egyptian Doctor).

‘What should the nineteenth century have done in its youth with Rothschild and Napoleon? What is the United States to do with its money kings and bosses? What are we to do with ours?’

G. B. S.

These and similar questions were raised in Shaw’s mind by the emergence of dictatorship in the nineteen-thirties. But for the apparently successful consolidation of power effected then by Mussolini, Stalin, Atatürk, Salazar, and Hitler such questions probably would never have been asked. For all practical purposes Shaw failed to answer them. His failure was the measure of his bewilderment, not less profound for being unconfessed, in face of a world which had refused the Shavian Code, and which accordingly he alternately sermonized and gave up for lost.

Now when Shaw is bewildered he is apt to write badly; badly, that is, by his standards: garrulously, and round the point instead of to it. Such a play is *The Millionairess*. Worse than merely bad, this dramatized query as to what is to be done with people who rise to eminence by sheer force of personality is a stretch of boredom which no farcical rough and tumble, such as the throwing of one of its characters downstairs (off stage), can alleviate.

At one stage in her career the millionairess Boss enters a ‘basement in the Commercial Road’ to learn at first hand the truth about sweated labour. This is not uninteresting in view of the fact that Beatrice Webb had done precisely the same many years before, so giving Shaw the idea. This scene approaches humanity, but not quite near enough to warrant removing *The Millionairess* from the volume of Shaw’s Tiresome Plays.

(53) . THE KING, THE CONSTITUTION, AND
THE LADY

Written in 1936, and published in the *London Evening Standard* on 5th December of that year but never, so far as is known, performed.

‘A Fictitious Dialogue.’

G. B. S.

There is no valid reason for omitting this scrap from the catalogue of Shaw's dramatic writings. It is a typical Shavian playlet: it even has what is tantamount to a preface.

As its name implies, this piece of dramatic journalism was Shaw's contribution to the solution of the constitutional crisis over the love affair of Edward VIII. His contribution was not accepted. Instead, its publication while the King of England's abdication hung in the balance was denounced by Shaviphobes as shocking bad taste, wanton levity, and the rest. For Shaw, of course, was all for Edward marrying the woman of his choice without renouncing his throne. His argument was plausible enough. Indeed it would have been unanswerable had the crisis been as simple as Shaw's playlet, and not a swirl of powerful and conflicting national and social currents. By Shaw's humorous logic, the King is made to welcome the notion of marriage by a registrar instead of in a Christian church, because a Church wedding would cause displeasure to the eighty-nine per cent of his far-flung subjects who did not happen to be Christians. In brief, Shaw's solution was too reasonable. He suffers from an excess of reason as some suffer from an excess of uric acid: the complaint is persistent but not fatal. Man does not live by reason, any more than by bread, alone.

When Shaw decides to be glaringly tactless, ninety-nine times out of a hundred his inborn good taste and sense of propriety do not desert him. Thus in *The King, The Constitution, and The Lady* the characters (King, Prime Minister, Archbishop) are unnamed; the country is not Great Britain but 'the Kingdom of the Half-Mad'; and *The Lady, Mrs. Daisy Bell*, though specified as an American, does not appear.

(54) CYMBELINE REFINISHED

Written in 1937. First production by Ronald Adam at the Embassy Theatre, London, on 16th November 1937.

Among the First Players.

Joyce Bland played Imogen. The company included Olga Lindo, William Devlin, Norman Wooland, Earle Grey, George Woodbridge, and Peter Ashmore.

'I shall not deprecate the most violent discussion as to the propriety of meddling with masterpieces. All I can say is that the temptation to do it, and sometimes the circumstances which demand it, are irresistible.'

G. B. S.

At an Executive Council Meeting of the Governors of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, a proposal to revive *Cymbeline* in 1937 was quashed on the ground that the fifth act always went to pieces. Himself a Governor, Shaw suggested that the revival would find favour if he contributed a new fifth act. To his surprise the applause greeting this blasphemy was not wholly jocular, and the idea began to haunt him until he exorcised it by doing the job. The result, however, was first offered to the public in London, as noted above, and not in Shakespeare's town.

The general question of whether Shaw is the man to improve on Shakespeare is touched on later in this book.

(55)

GENEVA

Written in 1938. First production by Roy Limbert at the Malvern Festival on 1st August 1938; and subsequently by him at the Saville Theatre, London, on 22nd November 1938. First North American production by the Colbourne-Jones Company at the Royal Alexandra Theatre, Toronto, Canada, on 30th October 1939; and subsequently by Gilbert Miller and the Colbourne-Jones Company at the Henry Miller Theatre, New York, on 30th January 1940.

Among the First Players.

Bombardone was played in England by Cecil Truncer, and in America by Ernest Borrow. Battler was played in England by Norman Wooland and Walter Hudd, and in America by Maurice Colbourne. The Judge was played by Donald Wolfitt and Alexander Knox in England, and by Barry Jones in America. Sir Orpheus Midlander in England was Ernest Thesiger; in America, Laurence Hanray. Begonia Brown was created by Eileen Beldon, who was followed in the part by Alison Leggatt in London, and by Norah Howard in America. The Secretary of the League of Nations, in both England and America, was Cyril Gardiner.

'Lord Acton's dictum that power corrupts gives no idea of the extent to which flattery, deference, power, and apparently unlimited

money, can upset simpletons who in their proper places are good fellows enough. To them the exercise of authority is not a heavy and responsible job which strains their mental capacity and industry to the utmost, but a delightful sport to be indulged for its own sake, and asserted and reasserted by cruelty and monstrosity.'

G. B. S.

When Geneva was first produced Shaw was upbraided for making capital out of the tragedy of Europe and treating it with inexcusable levity. He answered that as he was powerless to alleviate the tragedy (because no one would adopt the Shavian Code), he would leave the world to stew in its own poisonous juices, while he pursued his profession and exercised his right as a comedic playwright to extract from the tragedy what comedy he could while he could.

He was only just in time. Geneva was successful only while the thunderclouds of Fascism and Naziism were gathering, and the moment they burst they killed it. For the play's chief interest lay in its portraits of Mussolini and Hitler, to see which audiences flocked as though the Devil himself had been on show. But the portraits, brilliant as far as they went, were not full-length but three-quarter ones that carefully omitted the feet of clay. When the storm burst in 1939 the public had no further use for portraits, for the dictators had appeared in person.

Nor, try as he might, could Shaw keep Geneva up to date. He wrote a new ending when war broke out which acknowledged rather than fitted the situation, and at some time or other he wrote a complete new act (Act III in the play's 1946 edition) which never was acted and probably never will be. It was no use: Hitler worked too fast. The truth is that the play was out of date before its ink was dry, and this for two main reasons. First, the League of Nations, which forms the play's framework, was moribund and even beginning to smell long before 1938. Secondly—a yet even more fatal touch—Shaw writes of the fleeting period when Hitler played second string to Mussolini and makes the Italian describe the Austrian as 'my understudy.' It is Hitler's meek acceptance of this description that dates the play and makes it dead as a piece of pre-war mutton.

Still, Geneva has some fine writing. True, it is sprinkled

with pro-Russian propaganda gags, but the political nature of the play excuses them, and they are all good-tempered. The long last act, on the other hand, is composed and manipulated with a mastery that makes it an unexcelled example of what is meant by the symphonic quality of Shavian drama. There is no action: only noise, musical noise, the music of fine, varied, modulated English prose; and the seated actors might for all the world be members of an orchestra, with the Judge for leader, and with Bombardone (Mussolini) and Battler (Hitler) chief soloists. As an echo of bad things far off and long ago (or as long ago as 'pre-war' seems), *Geneva* as a play may be forgotten. But as a piece of orchestration by a master of word music, its last act deserves to be rescued from the dust of an upper bookshelf.

(56) IN GOOD KING CHARLES'S GOLDEN DAYS

Written in 1939. First production by Roy Limbert at the Malvern Festival on 12th August 1939. First London production by Roy Limbert at the New Theatre on 9th May 1940.

Among the First Players.

At Malvern Ernest Thesiger played Charles II, and Alexander Knox his brother James. Fox and Newton were played respectively by Herbert Lomas and Cecil Trouncer. Eileen Beldon was the Nell Gwyn; Yvonne Arnaud the Louise de K  roualle; and Irene (later Dame Irene) Vanbrugh, Queen Catherine.

'Historians who confuse Charles's feelings for his wife with his appetite for Barbara Villiers do not know chalk from cheese biologically.'

G. B. S.

If you asked Shaw to write a Restoration comedy, this is the sort of play he would surprise you with.

It is not at all the sort of play Congreve or Farquhar or Vanbrugh would have written had they been as free as Shaw to dramatize Charles the Second's Court. There, ready sliced, were the ingredients invariably used by dramatists for their stew of adulterous intrigue known to us as Restoration drama: the voluptuous, raging Barbara; the designing, eavesdropping Louise; the adorable, compliant Nell; with royal Catherine as the constant wife and

female cuckold in the background. Shaw, however, uses none of them as pivots for his play, though Catherine he uses as the pivot of its short second act. Charles's women he uses only as seasoning for his drama, which is intellectual, not amorous, and as relief from its mental tension; declaring them, Catherine excepted, insufferably sour, stale, and boring. And to him, no doubt, they are. Really he discards them for the simpler reason that (as he knows but perhaps will not admit even to himself) dramatization of love, passion, romantic intrigue, and Charles's Solomonic polygamy alike is beyond him. Prudently, therefore, he shuns the boudoirs of the Caroline Court. How ridiculous he would look there gasping with boredom, he knows—a queerer fish and more out of water than Mark Twain's Yankee at King Arthur's Court. So what would have been meat and drink to a Congreve, Shaw eschews as unassimilable poison. In short, Charles's women are as sour as the grapes in the fable.

There was vastly more to Charles, however, than the petticoats that flounced around him. Without any shadow of doubt the astutest sovereign ever to sit on England's throne, Elizabeth not excepted, Charles was not only King but perforce his own adviser. Elizabeth, a quick pupil to whom a wink was as good as a nod, had Cecil behind her: Charles, with no comparable statesman to be trusted, had to be his own Cecil. Elizabeth's throne was at least secure, whoever sat on it: Charles's had been kicked over, and in all men's minds it was still spattered with his murdered father's blood. If there were enemies of monarchy in Elizabeth's time, they did not count: but in Charles's time they had tasted blood. The throne had been set up again, but its sanctions and foundations were now political rather than traditional or constitutional. In short, it balanced on a knife-edge: and Charles's skill in keeping both it in being and himself on it was almost diabolical: at any rate it was unerring.

How odd it is that Shaw, though going out of his way in his preface to stress this aspect of the King, in his play does nothing about it. Here again, in Charles's statecraft, is God's plenty for a dramatist and to spare, and a plenty

one would have thought to Shaw's intellectual liking. Yet he passes it by, only remarking that the political facts of Charles's reign had been chronicled so often by modern historians of all parties, from the Whig Macaulay to the Jacobite Hilaire Belloc, that there was no novelty left for the chronicler to put on the stage. This excuse limps badly. To dramatize what these historians had chronicled would have been a novelty; as it still would be, for it still remains to be done. A chronicle play of the real Charles, with the women for once kept in their proper place, the background, and in the forefront the King manœuvring and manipulating people and events with a wit, a wisdom, and a courage before which Machiavelli himself would bow: that would be a novelty indeed, and a welcome one. Moreover, it would be a play that caught Charles for the first time in true perspective.

Why did Shaw not attempt the portrait? Perhaps the answer is twofold: that Charles's statecraft, though nothing if not dramatic, was as complex and involved as all dealings with double-dealers must be; and that Shaw, when he wrote his play, was eighty-three years old. One may wonder what would have happened if in 1923 Mrs. Shaw had suggested Charles instead of Joan as the subject for a play to Shaw, then at his mellowest. Would he have given us a great chronicle play illumining one of the most crucial periods, and certainly the most misunderstood, of English history, as in Saint Joan he illumined fifteenth-century Europe? Would the world now be richer by a drama in which government and liberty and loyalty were dissected on the same Olympian plane as were religion and feudalism and nationalism in the play Shaw actually did write in 1923?

As it is, we must take what he wrote at eighty-three and not what he might have written at sixty-five, and be thankful. There is much to be thankful for. He gives us not history, either petticoat or political, but a page of fancied history in which the great proponents of religion, art, science, and government cross minds. The result may resemble a Platonic symposium more than a play: but by Shavian standards, let us remember, a symposium *is* a play; and by

those standards *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* is an almost perfect (Shavian) play. It is, in short, talk—to excess.

But what talk! Philosophic speculation and the divine attribute of curiosity sustain it high in the heavens of the great abstractions, and the whirr of cerebration keeps it going. Zestfully, even playfully, the universe is questioned and the soul searched, until one feels that some sort of aerial football is in progress with the ball of conversation being kicked around infinity. It is exhilarating. It is questioning. It is brimming with curiosity and therefore Shaw at his most Shavian and best. In it, economics, Creative Evolution, Socialism, and all the other 'ics' and 'isms' of his fighting days are laid aside. The sword is laid aside: and the clown's bladder. Plot is laid aside: and history. Dogma is laid aside: and all cocksureness. Unencumbered, indeed almost disembodied, Shaw, writing more than ever as his fancy dictates, soars up and away from the flesh, the dust and the battle, to consider the mysteries; of numbers and the stars, of the still small voice of conscience, of beauty and design.

The parallel between this play and *The Tempest* is far from a fanciful one. Until 1946 it would have included each play as its author's last. Though the surprising advent of *Buoyant Billions* destroyed this extent of the parallel, the likeness between the two plays persists. It is a spiritual likeness. As Shakespeare, surviving the tumult of disillusionment and purged of the pessimism and passions of his great tragedies, climbed in *The Tempest* to 'cloud-capped towers' of philosophic calm, so Shaw in *Good King Charles* climbs to his, as thought to sanctuary, his fighting over. Shaw's towers are not ivory. They are high and full of life, capped with serene clouds of curiosity. The functions of art, the laws of mathematics, the possibilities of science, the ethics of government, the secrets of the universe, these are the play's stuff, and they are treated with a humility of spirit surprising in an author usually so dogmatic and pugnacious. Here Shaw is content to be curious. He postulates great questions without insisting on the answers, probes high and low without an analysis

of findings, calls witnesses but forbears to pronounce verdicts. Far from laying down the law, on the whole he even forbears to preach.

Good King Charles would thus have made an ideal last play, ending the long career with a cosmic query, a challenge to human knowledge, lofty, serene, tolerant, and hopeful. Our last glance of the ancient dramatist would then have been of an irrepressible old philosopher perched in the towers of imaginative curiosity, meditating on the mysteries of life. It was not to be. Habit was too strong. The demon propelling Shaw along the playwright's path for more than fifty years, prodded the aged pilgrim to his uncertain feet as soon as Hitler was out of the world's way, and forced him to take the road again. For Shaw must write or die.

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BUOYANT BILLIONS

Written in 1946-8. Shaw determined that this play should be first publicly performed at the reopening of the Malvern Festival (in abeyance since the outbreak of war in 1939) and nowhere else. Unfortunately, the structural alterations to the Malvern Theatre required by the authorities before relaunching the festival were completed neither by 1947 nor by 1948.

First production as *Zu Viel Geld* at Schauspielhaus, Zürich, on 21st October 1948.

Among the First Players.

Erwin Kalser played Bill Buoyant, and Maria Becker the part of She.

'When I write a play I do not foresee nor intend a page of it from one end to the other: the play writes itself. I may reason out every sentence until I have made it say exactly what it comes to me to say; but whence or how or why it comes to me, or why I persisted, through nine years of unrelieved market failure, in writing instead of in stockbroking or turf book-making or peddling, I do not know. You may say it was because I had a talent that way. So I had; but that fact remains inexplicable.'

G. B. S.

In the course of an interview in 1947 a reporter asked Shaw the name of his latest play. He received the answer that the title had not been finally decided, but that he could provisionally call it *Piffle*. It would, of course, be untrue

to say one wonders why so apt a title was discarded: one knows. Still, as a terse, vivid, accurate, and just description of the play concerned, Piffle could hardly be bettered.

There is this to be said for Buoyant Billions, or rather for its begetter: that he presented it to the public with apologies and some signs of diffidence. But he did present it; there was the fault. There is always the wastepaper-basket or the scrapheap. Nor, truth to tell, does his diffidence always withstand examination. For example, he calls the play a 'comediatta.' (Would that it were, it would then be shorter.) It is nothing of the sort. It is a fully fledged, full-dress affair in four acts requiring between them three by no means inexpensive sets of scenery and an acting company fifteen strong.

Elsewhere Shaw calls the work 'a trivial comedy.' This is a fair enough description, though the captious would hold that its main claim to comedy is merely the negative claim that it is not tragic; apart, of course, from the tragedy of Shaw having written it. And whether it conforms to the canons of comedy and ends happily, depends on one's ideas about happiness. But, happily, it ends.

Somewhere in the play someone says: 'Let me introduce you. My stepbrothers, Tom, Dick, and Harry.' This is a memorable line in the sense that it is the key to all the characters. Toms and Dicks and Harrys all, and bloodless ones to boot, they are not humanized by being saddled with such names as Fiffy and Babzy, or made less nonentical by being stood on their heads and made to go through their tricks in the Shavian circus.

In the play's preface Shaw asks to be forgiven. That is easily done. But we must go further, not only forgive but forget Buoyant Billions. This, fortunately, is even easier.

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x

In the course of a trivial correspondence in the summer of 1948, conducted mainly by postcards, the present writer somewhat fearfully took Bernard Shaw to task for producing the piffle of Buoyant Billions, beseeching him, if he could not bring himself to scrap it, at least to oust it from the

unique position it would hold as the final Shavian play by the simple expedient of writing yet another.

While it was improbable that this advice—or, for that matter, any advice from any quarter—would carry much weight with a nonagenarian as obstinate as Shaw, none the less, a month or so later, came the reply announcing that he not only had revised *Buoyant Billions* ‘most drastically,’ especially the part of the mathematician, but was already at work on another play.

Both the nature and the name of this play remain secrets for the duration of the Shavian pleasure. Until its author lifts the veil, all that can be done for purposes of present reference and cataloguing is to call it by the common algebraical symbol for an unknown quantity: x . However x turns out, it will have started life at least in the confidence that it can scarcely be so weak and puny as not to knock its immediate predecessor into a cocked hat. And at least, whatever its faults, it has prevented *Buoyant Billions* from bringing down the curtain.

CHAPTER XII

IS BERNARD SHAW CONCEITED?

THERE are many questions about Bernard Shaw which still set people by the ears and split them into opposing camps. Is Bernard Shaw conceited? Is he consistent? Is he serious? These are typical questions, and that they are still burning questions is a measure of Shaw's failure to convince, and a proof that he is for ever defeating himself. For although he has been answering such questions assiduously since before the twentieth century began, the public is still asking them, and when it tries to answer them the answers are almost invariably wrong.

Those who do not know Bernard Shaw do not bother even to ask the first question. They take it for granted that he is conceited, abnormally and appallingly so. But it is a question well worth asking, and for myself I would answer that while Shaw has a very fine conceit of the importance of his work, and even of himself as the instrument for getting that work done, he is personally not in the least conceited. Incidentally, would not a man of his mental and literary powers be outstandingly a fool if he held a poor opinion of himself, and outstandingly a humbug if he pretended to hold that opinion? If Shaw's impartial opinion of Shaw is a healthy one, and he voices it, thereby offending the canons of gentlemanly conduct, he cannot help it; he would rather be ungentlemanly than a mock-modest humbug. Indeed, he has said that no true artist can be a gentleman, adding, of course, that Bernard Shaw is an artist. 'I leave the delicacies of retirement to those who are gentlemen first and literary workmen afterwards. The cart and trumpet for me.'

Before going further let us try to clear up this gentleman business; otherwise it will be in the way continually. Let it be said at once, then, that Bernard Shaw is a gentleman. And none of his brilliant attempts to prove the contrary succeeds. Gentleman can be given a hundred different



*'He always walks as though he had an appointment with himself and
might be late for it'*

meanings, according to taste and political prejudice, but everybody knows what it means. Shaw is not only a gentleman in the sense that he was born and bred one, but he is also a gentleman in the sense that he has good manners and fine feeling. King Charles the Second, asked what was the mark of a gentleman, replied: 'To be easy oneself, and to make others easy too.' Shaw fulfils this inspired definition admirably, and with all the more credit since his natural shyness tends to make his ease a trifle conscious. But Shaw is a gentleman in the far deeper sense of being quite literally a gentle man. Gentle to the depths of his being because he hates cruelty to any living thing, he is ferociously ungente only when other people are ferociously cruel. But none of these definitions suit Shaw when he himself uses the word gentleman, though they remain valid for all that. Instead, he twists the word to his own purposes, and makes it fit his special pleadings. Thus he defines a gentleman as 'one who has money enough to do what every fool would do if he could afford it: that is, consume without producing.' Or again: 'He who believes in education, criminal law, and sport, needs only property to make him a perfect modern gentleman.' General Burgoyne in *The Devil's Disciple* is a gentleman because, as Shaw puts it, 'he pleads all through for softening and easing the trials by reciprocal politeness and consideration between all the parties, and for ignoring the villainy of his gallows, the unworthiness of his cause, and the murderousness of his profession. The picture is completed by the band playing Handel's music, and the Christian clergyman reading the Bible to give the strangling an air of being an impressive ceremony.' This passage suggested to me a further definition of a gentleman in the Shavian sense: A gentleman is a man who is at home and happy in society because he has taken its evils for granted for so long that they appear to him as virtues. In other words, Shaw applies the word to people who do things of which he disapproves. In that case he is sometimes a gentleman, in the Shavian sense, himself.

Reverting to the question of his conceit, consider his position at the outset of his career. He comes to a strange country; he is penniless; his outlook is a cross between

those of a dynamiter and a missionary; he has his bread and butter to earn; his name to make; and a point of view which he honestly thinks should be heard. Remembering the early fate of his novels, how should he proceed? For he was determined, as we know, not to spend his life in providing fodder for mice if he could help it. The answer need surprise no one accustomed to twentieth-century methods. He decided to do what every successful person does to-day, and to a large extent is compelled to do: advertise. Having no money to advertise his wares, he could only capitalize himself. Accordingly, in cold business blood, the man Bernard Shaw engaged the wit Bernard Shaw to advertise Bernard Shaw the philosopher and preacher. That the wit rather enjoyed the job only made the engagement a shrewder stroke of business. Shaw has packed these considerations into the following remarks. 'In England as elsewhere the spontaneous recognition of really original work begins with a mere handful of people, and propagates itself so slowly that it has become a commonplace to say that genius, demanding bread, is given a stone until after its possessor's death. The remedy for this is sedulous advertisement. Accordingly, I have advertised myself so well that I find myself, whilst still in middle life, almost as legendary as the Flying Dutchman.'

Bernard Shaw's success as a salesman argues not conceit so much as instinctive wisdom in his choice of policy, and an impish courage, that no doubt he enjoyed displaying, in carrying it out. Is the manufacturer conceited because he tells you that his soaps, or cigarettes, or razors, or whatnots are positively the best and that no home is complete without them? Do we think him puffed up because he spends large sums each year in blowing his own trumpet? Do we find him insufferable because he duns into us the superlative qualities of his goods from hoardings in all colours and sizes of screaming print? Of course not. If we object to him it is because he defaces the countryside, not because he is conceited. We congratulate him, rather, and in England if he is successful enough the King makes him a peer of the realm. It does not seem fair to tolerate the manufacturer and condemn the philosopher. Both have

goods to sell; the only problem is how best to sell them. Thus Shaw, in realizing the value of advertisement, only anticipated the approved ways of modern business. Even so he strenuously denies that he has ever had time to practise what he preaches in this respect, and declares that half his work is unknown to the public for lack of advertisement. It might be thought that what he had been unable to achieve for himself the films would achieve for him. For there is no doubt that, dating from the successful filming of *Pygmalion*, the screen and the radio brought him a vast new public. Unfortunately, however, the real Shaw and the message he cares so much about will remain hidden from this new public just as it has always remained hidden from the old; for the public, old or new, great or small, gets from his plays only what it brings to them: that is, laughter and entertainment. The wider his public becomes, the greater will grow the reputation not of Bernard Shaw so much as of his *alter ego*, Joey the Clown, whom we shall meet again.

Still, any publicity is better than no publicity, and there is no doubt that practice made Shaw well-nigh perfect at the game. He could charm publicity out of an egg-shell. His beard, his diet, catching cold, moving house, the tailoring of his coat, nothing is too trivial to be grist to his mill. The very brickbats thrown at him he acknowledges gratefully, because if they fly near enough to be caught, he can barb them with wit and throw them back at his assailants. Thus when someone calls him an 'ignorant ass,' Shaw neither passes the insult by, nor grows indignant at it. Instead, he blandly owns the soft impeachment, taking care at the same time to associate himself with some great man and the ass with merit, like this: 'Sir Isaac Newton confessed himself an ignorant man; and although I know everything he knew, and a good deal more besides, yet relatively—*relatively*, mind—I am almost as ignorant as he. The term "ass" I take to be a compliment. Modesty, hard work, contentment with plain fare, development of the ear, underestimation by the public, all these are the lot of the ass and the last of the Bassetts.' How delightful!

And when Winston Churchill sought to dismiss him as

the Chatterbox of Socialism, Shaw deftly turned the accusation into a truism by answering: 'What's wrong with that? I do talk a great deal. I have never set up to be a strong silent man.' How disarming! In both instances, of course, the method is that of jiu-jitsu, of giving in the direction the opponent presses, of disablement by agreement. It is great fun.

When invited to become a vice-president of some society or other, Bernard Shaw retorted that he was never vice-president of anything, and that if he were he would be vice-president of the universe. In the same disarming vein he styled himself 'a sort of unofficial Bishop of Everywhere.' How is it that we have come to tolerate this kind of thing, this superb arrogance, until if the truth were confessed we rather enjoy it? Well, in the first place Shaw is without competitors for the bishopric of Everywhere; especially since J. B. Priestley, once a candidate, settled down as a resident minor canon of the diocese. Carlyle was the last public sage, and when Shaw arrived the post was going begging. Having accepted it, with none to say him nay, the habitual thoroughness of the man made a thoroughness of the job; and whereas Carlyle was known only as the Sage of Chelsea, Shaw never let himself be known as the Sage of Whitehall, or of Hertfordshire, but always insisted, as in his broadcast from Australia, that he was 'speaking to the universe.' England has never been rich in sages or prophets; and when one appears in her midst she is rather flattered, and is inclined to encourage him to behave as he pleases, within limits, like an elephant at the Zoo.

The other point in Shaw's favour is that he is an Irishman; for the English would never dream of allowing an Englishman to talk to them the way Shaw does, alternately blackguarding them and treating them as children to be led by the nose for their own good. The truth is, that Englishmen are not without fame and honour save in their own country. There, only foreigners may criticize with impunity, only foreigners impress. Thus, if Miss Shoe of Bootle dances well enough to earn her living in ballet, the first thing she is advised to do is to change her name to Shokova or Schobetska. Even in battle the English seem

to prefer to be led by foreigners. Thus in the wars against Napoleon it was an Irishman who led the troops to victory; just as in the Kaiser's war it was first an Irishman, and then a Scot under a Frenchman; and in Hitler's war two Irishmen under an American. So, too, in the sphere of government. It was the Jewish-blooded Benjamin Disraeli who first conceived the idea of the British Empire of yesterday, and won the romantic co-operation of a queen who could not bear the sight of her four-square English Gladstone: it was two Scots, Campbell-Bannerman and Balfour, who headed the respective Government and Opposition Benches at the opening of the century: it was a Canadian who deposed the English Asquith in favour of the Welsh Lloyd George: and though it was the English Baldwin who turned out Lloyd George, not he but the Scottish Canadian Bonar Law succeeded him: whilst England's first Labour Prime Minister, was, again, a Scot. Later, too, the complete Englishman, Neville Chamberlain, made way for a Prime Minister half-American by maternal descent.

This curious trait in a conquering race is no doubt partly explained by the easy-going good nature and sheer laziness of its people. Assure an Englishman of his week-ends and his golf or football, and for all he cares the devil himself may rule him. But I think the real explanation lies deeper, and is that, way down in their subconscious selves, Englishmen have long since decided, partly from laziness, partly from complacency, and partly from sincere conviction, that in some mysterious way they are innately superior to all the other nations of the earth. Therefore, smiling to themselves, they say: 'Let the foreign critics castigate and harangue us to their hearts' content, with their cries of Hypocrite! Perfidious Albion! and the rest—we shall not flinch nor take what they say too seriously. Likewise let the foreign leaders stand to the wheel on the captain's bridge, and play their pranks—we are on board too, watching, and our own good sense and native seamanship will keep the ship afloat in any storm.' Bernard Shaw sensed this, as every foreigner must, when he said that the Englishman overrated the Irishman 'with a generosity born of a traditional conviction of his own superiority in the deeper

aspects of character.' It is quite in keeping with this anomalous attitude of giving authority to foreigners, therefore, that we English have suffered the Irish Bernard Shaw to settle among us and to set himself up as Public Thinker Number One. Truth to tell, we are delighted to have someone to think for us. We are grateful for advice, so long as we do not have to take it.

As publicity merchant Bernard Shaw tickled the public's palate so successfully that it kept on, and keeps on, asking for more, although for many years past he has been in no commercial need of limelight. It is the public's fault; we refuse to let him retire from the publicity business; we make him work even when he is ill, squeezing copy from his very sick-bed. When he holidayed on the Mediterranean or by the Italian lakes, for instance, the world's newspapers would break out into a veritable rash of pictures of Bernard Shaw, showing him in all kinds of postures and garments and lack of garments. We really cannot hold Shaw responsible for this sort of thing. At least I, for one, decline to believe that the first thing he did on arriving at his hotel or villa was to ring up the local Press and say: 'This is Bernard Shaw speaking. I am swimming to-morrow. Kindly send photographer.' The pictures appeared simply because the ubiquitous local press photographer made it his infernal business to be there and take them, because he and his editor knew that you and I want them and like them and expect them, and because Shaw, always willing to oblige, smilingly submits. As the price of submission, however, he insists that photographs of him shall not be haphazard snapshots, but that each one shall be thought out and posed with the art that conceals posing. And it is Shaw on such occasions who does most of the thinking out and posing. He is, by the way, a keen and highly skilled photographer himself, and his camera's most reluctant and elusive victim was his wife. All these considerations, then, the reporter's fear that he will be fired unless he gets the photographs, Shaw's willingness to help a journalist colleague, and his conviction that whatever is worth doing is worth doing well, all these are behind Monday's picture of Bernard Shaw Swimming Breast Stroke, behind Tuesday's of Bernard

Shaw Floating, and behind Wednesday's of Shaw Turning Turtle. Thursday offers a picture of G. B. S. Submerged. But not for long, for Friday shows him standing on a raft in a pair of bathing drawers; Saturday, drying himself; and Sunday, completing the week's strange eventful history, a picture of Bernard Shaw Dry.

Even in his nineties Shaw was often unmercifully hounded: as in 1948, when Joe Louis's publicly expressed wish to visit Shaw was taken as a signal by the press to plan an invasion of Ayot St. Lawrence with cameras, lights, and the whole paraphernalia of publicity generally. Shaw, however, firmly put down both his aged feet. No, he said, the visit must be private and without fuss: no privacy, no visit.

Until we let him alone we have only ourselves to blame. When his London home was in the now no longer existing Adelphi Terrace off the Strand, an enterprising burglar induced Mrs. Shaw to put up at a bend in the beautiful Adam staircase a big grille made of iron spikes. Shaw commented that though it made the place look like the entrance to a private madhouse, and was obviously easily surmountable by any self-respecting burglar, it would come in handy to keep out reporters. A conceited man would keep open house for the Press.

In some respects Bernard Shaw behaves like a conceited person from a strict sense of duty. Sir Barry Jackson, as though in response to Shaw's remark about genius being denied recognition during its possessor's lifetime, instituted the Malvern Festival as a tribute to a living Bernard Shaw. The septuagenarian dramatist at once perceived in a perfectly objective and impersonal manner that he would have to appear at the Festivals in person, season by season, if visitors were to be fully satisfied with what they got for their money. With the ability to put himself in other people's shoes (to which much of his success as a playwright is due), Shaw realized that people would want to see him as well as his plays; and many is the time, when he has been feeling tired or unwell, that he has forced himself to go to the Malvern Theatre so that the audience should not be disappointed. That those upstairs may see him as advantageously as those downstairs, he sits in the front row of the

dress circle, and in the intervals he makes a point of leaving his seat and placing himself on view, as though casually, outside in the open where the audience congregates. No doubt he is capable of enjoying his own plays, and no doubt he wants to stretch his legs in the intervals and breathe the clean hillside evening air; but primarily Shaw's behaviour at Malvern is dictated by the sincere wish to contribute what he can to the success of those responsible for a Festival originally called after him. He may be quite mistaken in thinking that people want to see him, or that his presence adds to the audience's pleasure and to the box-office receipts: but he is no more conceited on these occasions than Royalty when it elects to proceed on a rainy day, slowly in an open carriage, for the express purpose of being seen, instead of in a fast closed car.

This is all very well, someone will say, but there is no escaping the fact that many of Shaw's remarks as they appear in his works, or in the Press, or in this book, are the remarks of a conceited man. I do not think there is any need even to try to escape from this fact, because those words in the last sentence—'as they appear'—explain it. Shaw's remarks as they appear in print are not as he made them. In print they lack two essentials—the manner and tone of their delivery. When his opinions are tossed off rapidly and lightly in a soft Dublin accent with a twinkle of the eye and (as I have called it before) a twinkle of the tongue, they appear no longer as they do in cold print, the intolerable assertions of an omniscient egomaniac, but as they really are, the sincere, unaffected words of a quick mind, a humorous talker, and a very human person; charming, courteous, and a good listener withal, whom you suspect nothing but humbug can anger, nothing but cruelty jar, and nothing but rudeness put out of countenance.

Yet in spite of the brogue and the twinkle, Shaw is fundamentally sincere and means every word he says. It is just that he likes to go 'the extra mile.' When he exaggerates he is not romancing or lying; he is exaggerating. He is so keen to demonstrate a truth that he puts it under a microscope before showing it to you, as Dickens did. Dickens's description of Mr. Squeers's academy for young

gentlemen, for instance, is full of exaggerations; yet no one denies the truth of its central point, that boys' schools in those days could be sinks of cruelty and tyranny. So with Bernard Shaw. But we must not anticipate discussion of this serious sincerity of his, which deserves a chapter to itself, and in due course shall have it. It is enough to say here that, when Shaw ends an argument, as he once did, with the words: 'I assert my intellectual superiority, that is all,' although some may hold those to be the words of an incurably conceited man, others will accept them at their face value. Then, with 'the extra mile' thrown in, they become simply the candid opinion of a man who, if he thinks that he is right and the other fellow wrong, is honest enough to say so. And I imagine that most of us prefer this kind of fighting manliness and honesty to the usual substitutes, such as bad temper, evasion, sulking, back-biting, or the insincere modesty that fishes for the equally insincere compliments of the kind current in mutual admiration societies.

'Why should I get another man to praise me when I can praise myself?' asks Bernard Shaw with relentless zest. Why indeed? Do we hear a voice answering that there is no reason at all, unless he fears that the praise of the other man will be less full-throated than his own, or, worse, inaudible, so that he must therefore fill the horrid silence with the blare of his own trumpet? Almost as though he had heard such a voice, Shaw tells it not to be silly and to listen. 'I really cannot respond to this demand for mock-modesty,' he explains. 'I am ashamed neither of my work nor of the way it is done. I like explaining its merits to the huge majority who don't know good work from bad. It does them good; and it does me good, curing me of nervousness, laziness, and snobbishness.' Could anything be more straightforward? If he is conceited, at least his conceit is honestly forthright and brazenly unaffected. He has never been afflicted with what he calls 'the modest cough of a minor poet.'

Not that the question of affectation in connection with Bernard Shaw can, I think, ever arise. That stigma, which attaches itself so easily to small men who succeed only in

aping great ones, Shaw has never shown. As we said of him in the nineties, he has no time for posing. Oscar Wilde must have assumed a mass of affectations: but then he of all men had ample leisure in which to think them out. Even were Shaw willing to harbour growths so alien to his nature, he is far too busy to cultivate them.

Another point: Does Shaw's persistent and deliberate comparison of himself with the world's great men denote conceit? We have already seen how by implication he associates himself with men of genius in general, and with Aeschylus, Shakespeare, and Sir Isaac Newton in particular; and it would be no exaggeration to say that a careful combing of Shaw's works would reveal a list of great names from which few would be missing. This association of himself with the great is not a direct one. He does not challenge comparison so much as insinuate it. When he is explaining or defending himself, he rightly calculates that the mere introduction of a great name will lend some of its own prestige to himself, add some of its own weight to his argument.

By pressing the immortals into his service Shaw is making a bid, conscious or not, for immortality for himself. Consider, for instance, the Prefaces. Every one of their quarter of a million words is aimed directly or otherwise at changing some opinion, smashing some convention, or effecting some reform; but aimed, so far, in vain. For fifty years and more their author has been trying to convert us, to impress us, to call us to repentance; and he has failed. Yet in his Introduction to the Prefaces, while frankly confessing his wholesale defeat to date, Shaw seeks to lift both his own fruitless self and his equally fruitless Prefaces to impressive heights by remarking, with elaborate casualness, that they are 'no more out of date than the Gospels, or Utopia, or Tom Jones, or Little Dorrit, or even the plays of Aristophanes and Euripides and the Socratic dialogues of Plato.' Again, in publishing his first novel, *Immaturity*, Shaw first disarms criticism by insisting that it is the book of 'a raw youth,' and then goes on to attribute to it the greatest possible merit as a work of immaturity, by comparing it, indirectly, with Beethoven's early septet for wind

instruments. In this way the whole of Shaw's apologetical and polemical work is studded with great names, giving the impression of an irregular procession of the illustrious dead marching through his pages. By drawing our attention to their stature, Shaw seems to add imperceptibly to his own. He cannot even revisit his father's old business premises in Jervis Street, Dublin, without suggesting that he is making an archaeological discovery of the first importance. When he sees the name of the firm, he manages to invest himself subtly with some of the fame of a Tutankhamen, by describing how he found 'on one of the pillars of a small portico the ancient inscription "Clibborn and Shaw" still decipherable, as it were on the tombs of the Pharaohs.'

Is this conceit? Is it not rather the conscious and skilful practice of dialectical art, by which Shaw invests his arguments with impressiveness, authority, and strength? Then, too, mental association with the great is not unnatural to Bernard Shaw, who is fundamentally shy of his living fellows, who is at home only with the mighty dead, who lives imaginatively always on the heroic plane, and whose interests are held completely only by whole epochs and peoples. But I think the real reason for what must seem to many a form of megalomania is to be found on a higher plane. A man can think highly of his own work, with a kind of awful humility, because he believes it to be not his work at all but that of some Mighty Force operating through him. Such is Shaw's belief. Seriously he suggests that his novel, *The Irrational Knot*, is 'an early attempt on the part of the Life Force to write a *Doll's House* in English by the instrumentality of a very immature writer of 24.' And seriously he offers *Back to Methuselah* as a contribution towards a new Bible. Bernard Shaw the instrument, the mere mouthpiece and medium, must serve this Force with every fibre of his being, as a good servant serves his master. He must speak with the thunderous authority of such a master. To serve faithfully he will therefore strain every nerve to enlist the support of the great. Thus when Communism, for instance, is under discussion the eager servant is not content to enlist Karl Marx: he enlists Jesus. And if sometimes it appears that Jesus is agreeing with

Shaw rather than Shaw with Jesus, that is only because the servant is anxious that there shall be no risk, if he can avoid it, that his mysterious master's message will not be heard, or its meaning not clearly understood.

If one could take seriously Shaw's self-comparison with Shakespeare, then there would indeed be evidence of conceit in the man. As we saw earlier, however, Shaw empties the comparison of all serious intent by disclaiming any comparison '*on Shakespeare's own ground*' and by the unequivocal statement that 'in manner and art nobody can write better than Shakespeare because, carelessness apart, he did the thing as well as it can be done within the limits of human faculty.'

Suppose, then, we leave 'Shakespeare's own ground' for Shaw's, what do we find? Conceit? Rather we find nonsense, though the nonsense may well have sprung from ground watered with conceit. We find, in the main, only an untenable complaint and an undisputed contention: the complaint, that Shakespeare was not a philosopher; the contention, that Shaw knows many things that Shakespeare didn't. Why a playwright, whose business is delineation of characters and construction of scenes for the conflict of those characters, should, any more than an architect, dentist, or butcher, also preach a coherent philosophy, or be adversely criticized in default of one, Shaw never made clear. It was enough that Shaw himself was a philosopher.

As for the contention that he is 'better than Shakespeare' because born three hundred years later, its absurdity becomes plain in its logical conclusion that the biggest dunces alive now are 'better than Shakespeare' because they know what a railway is, can turn off the radio, send a telegram, and look through a telescope. The dunces know more than Shakespeare ever dreamed—in some ways. They know, for instance, that Shakespeare's passage about the floor of heaven being inlaid with patines of bright gold is sheer unadulterated nonsense (though they may not know that the nonsense derives from the long since exploded Ptolemaic conception of the universe). For all that, it is the kind of

nonsense that keeps Shakespeare alive and his name among the world's bright, enduring household words. When Shaw can write nonsense as magical, he will be able to challenge Shakespeare fitly—'on Shakespear's own ground.' So far he has written only critical nonsense out of his own conceit.

Fortunately pins to prick conceit are always at hand. Shaw's can be pricked, for instance, by comparing the response inspired respectively by Shakespeare and Shaw in other artists, on the assumption that one great creative work inspires another in another medium. To consider one medium alone—music—and to start a list there is no need to complete, Shakespeare inspired Verdi, Gounod, Arne, Quilter, Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky. . . . Against this scale of Shakespeare's, enriched with creative art, heavy with operas, song settings, suites, ballet music and the like, what has Shaw to offer? Only, it seems, Oscar Straus and his Chocolate Soldier.

Or we can prick Shaw's bubble with a pin kindly supplied by himself. Having written *Arms and The Man*, he explained that he intended Sergius Saranoff to be a kind of comic Hamlet. Since there is no reason why a comic figure should not rival in stature a tragic figure, the world acclaiming its Tartuffes and Falstaffs, its Quixotes and Pickwicks equally with its Oedipuses, Fausts, and Othellos, let us (Shaw-prompted) by all means measure Sergius against Hamlet. Unless a man is to be no longer known by his work, the result will show roughly the measure of Shaw against Shakespeare. Mathematics neatly expresses this relationship thus—Sergius : Hamlet = Shaw : Shakespeare—and if the Irishman in this equation can contemplate it without deflation, he is beyond pricking.

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It is difficult to see how Shaw can escape conviction of conceit for his attitude to, not Shakespeare's, but his own plays. These he has long proclaimed inviolable, buttressing their sanctity with the doctrine of Shavian Infallibility *in dramatis cathedra*, and threatening with Bulls of Shavian excommunication all who disobey his standing orders of No Cuts.

The plays, he says, are already 'cut to the bone.' Are they? Strange that he alone thinks so! Producers and actors, whose business it is to stage the plays, find them so far from cut to the bone that they can cut and come again. The wordiness they discover is no doubt partly due to Shaw's painstaking habit of driving points home, and partly to his literary facility. 'I perceive,' he exclaims naïvely, 'that nobody except myself ever dreams of taking the trouble to attain really exhaustive literary expression.' Yet the last place for exhaustive literary expression is the stage, where the intonation of a single word can be more pregnant with meaning than a whole paragraph however exhaustive, a pause more eloquent than a word, and a silence more moving than a speech. Though commonly (however unfairly) accounted vain, an actor has at least sense enough to know that the effectiveness of a part or a speech often depends on its brevity rather than on its length, as any artist playing Shylock or Lady Macbeth—two parts great because short—will confirm. On the stage, dramatic expression does not oust literary expression (save in dumb show) but nicely balances it, sharing its work. For this reason actors worth their salt will constantly interrupt early rehearsals, not to ask for more lines, but fewer, and will point to this sentence or to that clause in their scripts, to this epithet or that adverb, and beg for their excision. 'I don't *need* it' is the burthen of the wise actor's cry. 'Need it or not, you're going to say it,' says Shaw. 'No cuts.'

Does Shaw know best? I doubt it, on the ground that no author is the best judge of his own work.

A distinction should be made, however, between the earlier and the later plays. Those written before Shaw's reputation was secure are comparatively taut: only a fool would wish to cut *Candida*, say, or *Arms and The Man*. But as he won his laurels, so Shaw learnt to snap his fingers at the public, and wrote plays less and less suitable for the stage and more and more suitable for the browsing leisure of the library. It is these that cry to be cut. If it be asked, Which precisely? the answer is, Find out by acting them.

This is not to question actors' ability to learn or deliver long speeches: again, only a fool would wish to cut from

the Inquisitor's long speech in Saint Joan or from Magnus's long speech in The Apple Cart. No strongholds of verbosity, these are magnificent instruments for displays of virtuosity for actor and author alike. Such *tours de force* apart, however, there runs through the Shavian drama as a whole an impeding undergrowth of verbiage, first conspicuous in those I have called Plays Tiresome, and growing denser, as a rule, the later the play.

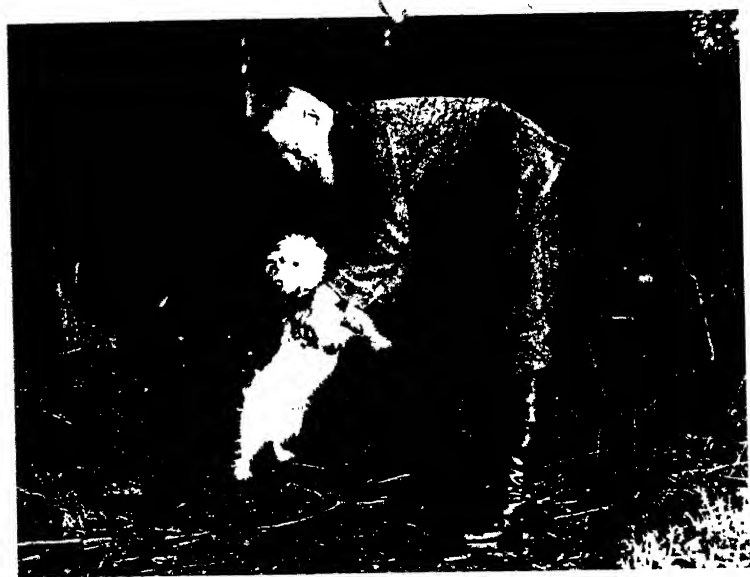
Naturally Shaw has a defence: he always has. It is the defence of a man who wants to safeguard his property and keep it intact. Before him is the example of Shakespeare and other writers suffering at the theatre's rude hands, and he remembers how even a man of such artistic integrity as Forbes-Robertson cut Fortinbras from his production of Hamlet without a qualm. If, argues Shaw to himself, I allow a line of my plays to be cut while I live, what will they not do to them when I am dead? I must therefore secure my property as best I can. No cuts!

This would be an excellent defence were it not weakened by the assumption, complacent and conceited, that the property was insusceptible of improvement. The best way to secure the Shavian property from spoliation is not by assiduous promulgation of the doctrine of Shavian Inviolability, but for Shaw, as owner of the property, himself to cut it to a point beyond which none but a madman would want to cut it further. But as this operation involves recognition of the imperfection of the Shavian drama as published, Shaw would never face, much less undertake it.

'Cut' is too strong a word. There is no question of hacking or slashing, page by page; but of trimming, pruning, clipping, sentence by sentence, clause by clause, and sometimes even word by word. Play-pruning is a delicate process, a barber's rather than a butcher's job. It needs great patience and considerable experience, and also the capacity not only to enter the minds of actor, author, and audience, but to keep, while pruning, the whole play—plot, characters, purpose, style, conflict, and tempo—steadily in view. In short, it is skilled work. And even the professional play producer, unless also a man of taste, insight, sympathy, and culture, can easily bungle it.

In print, true, Shaw's plays do not appear unduly wordy. This is because words that become verbiage on the stage may well remain felicitous literary ornament when read. Not only does acting dispense with many words that would otherwise be needed to convey an author's meaning, but the eye works much faster than the ear, and a page can be read that much faster than its content can be delivered across the footlights. Plays, however, are written to be acted, and producers are not concerned with what is only read. The plays read well. By all means, then, let well alone. Let the plays remain as they are, full-worded, and be enjoyed, as now, in books. Producers do not ask Shaw to deprive the world or posterity of a single word he has ever written or wants to preserve: they ask only that, in addition, there should be available an acting version of his drama, pruned of verbiage, cleared of undergrowth. Had he been less enamoured of his own work, none would have been better qualified than Shaw to prepare such a version. As it is, others with the good of his plays at heart will continue to prune them for the stage.

For it must not be thought that the Shavian ban on cuts is effective. It is frequently flouted and evaded. In Saint Joan's first production, for instance, while it is true there were no official cuts, at least two of the cast were asked with a wink from the producer to 'forget' this line and that. Even at Malvern, the Shavian citadel, Joan herself, in the wispy person of Elisabeth Bergner, systematically made cuts, and when caught by Shaw replied disarmingly that she would not have made them had she known he was in the theatre. Nor has the writer ever hesitated to prune a Shaw play to its greater glory. The test of good pruning is an audience's unawareness of it. On one occasion In Good King Charles's Golden Days was severely but carefully pruned of more than fifteen hundred of its first nine thousand words or so, with the astonishing result that no one suspected that so much as a sacrosanct comma was missing. Every one was happy: those that had seen the play before detecting in it a sparkle not previously there; while those that had only read it or were seeing it for the first time were at a loss to account for its reputation for



Above: Bernard Shaw at his country home at Ayot St. Lawrence in Hertfordshire

Below: 'It amuses me to talk to animals in a sort of jargon I have invented for them'

wordiness. In short, this pruning job is being done, willy-nilly, and can be done successfully. Would that Shaw himself had done it once for all!

To conclude. For his Brand-like pose of All or Nothing, for his adamantine yet ineffective edict of No Cuts, Shaw is convicted of either laziness or conceit (he can take his choice) and hereby sentenced to the delicate hard labour of preparing, in this world or the next, an acting version of his plays by pruning them to an average of nine-tenths of their present library or reading version. And to carry out his sentence with a better grace and understanding, let him recall his unstinted admiration of John Galsworthy's ability to extract a maximum dramatic effect from a minimum number of words. As A. R. Orage said truly, 'the hallmark of any great work of art is the economy of means used to create it.'

CHAPTER XIII

IS BERNARD SHAW CONSISTENT?

A COMPLETELY consistent person would be not only a very dull dog but almost a contradiction in terms, for he would be hardly human. Shaw is quite human, his glaring lapse from vegetarianism for the duration of an illness only confirming his humanity—the very common humanity of a helpless husband obeying his wife's orders under duress.

As men go, Shaw is conspicuously consistent. Not only was he consistent in practising those theories and fads which ministered to his comfort—osteopathy, for instance, and open-air underwear—but he was equally consistent in declining to practise those which would have undoubtedly ministered to his discomfort—Communism, for example, and Socialism. An arm-chair doctrinaire he was, and an arm-chair doctrinaire he remained.

He was consistent, too, in always being advanced, and always in a minority. When the minority swelled into a majority and thought it had caught up with Shaw, it always found that he had already stepped ahead to form the nucleus of a new minority.

Shaw wore many coats in his time, outgrowing each: but he never turned his coat. He liked *new* coats and for novelty, as such, he always had a weak spot. Anything New, whether it was Ibsen's New Woman, Wagner's New Music, Lenin's New Russia, or Mussolini's New Italy, could always count on Shaw's support—for a time, until the novelty wore off. New isms he embraced until he found them out. He welcomed each as a fresh provisional hypothesis to be discarded only when exploded by a fresher one. There was always something New somewhere, always some ism in the bud for Shaw the adventurous to nibble. Each in turn he boosted as potentially perfect, until each in turn, as it materialized and revealed its faults, disgusted him. However, we need not waste much sympathy over the fruitlessness of his search, because seeking but not finding, travelling but never arriving, suits Bernard Shaw;

for to the constitutional rebel, the satisfaction of discovery means stagnation, and arrival is only another name for death.

Again, how could Shaw be inconsistent, being the mystic he is? A mystic does not change his views; he cannot. If he could, he would cease to be a mystic. He can change the style of their expression (which may develop into all manner of intricate beauty and abundance), but that is not the same thing. For the mystic arrives at his philosophy of life, not by laborious reasoning, but by divination, an immediate, instinctive process, accomplished without effort and as irresistibly as the light broke on Paul of Tarsus on the Damascus road. The man of reason, on the other hand, to be a philosopher, must add up his data, fact to fact and figure to figure, until he finds their total. In short, the truth about life comes to the mystic as a vision, whilst to the man of reason it comes by calculation. The mystic knows the answer all along, and what he has to do is not an addition sum but a jigsaw puzzle, fitting the facts before him into the vision already seen. The mystic's picture may be no nearer the absolute truth than the man of reason's calculation, but at least it cannot be falsified by mathematical errors. It is the man of reason, therefore, who is liable to change his views, because he is liable to change the total of his sum. But the mystic, because it is not his to alter or deny, must perforce be content with his original vision. Where the man of reason grows by discovering new things, the mystic, denied growth, can but interpret things both new and old that he has known mystically for ever. As Sir Godfrey Kneller exclaims in Shaw's picture of Good King Charles's Golden Days: 'Man: artists do not prove things. They do not need to. They know them.' G. K. Chesterton once said that he could lie awake at night and hear H. G. Wells growing. No one could ever say this of Bernard Shaw, who stands serenely pat and pugnacious where he has always stood, at the threshold of a tent, eager to explain his vision to all who care to step inside. Does he beat a drum? Yes; and from a sense of duty he beats it loudly. 'It is only the man who has no message who is too fastidious to beat the drum at the door of his booth.'

The conviction that his vision is a mystical one and not

of his own making sometimes saves Shaw trouble. For when taken to task over a point he can always say 'Inspiration' to his critic, as he once said 'Press' to the street musician, and go his way. Thus, being asked after the first night of Heartbreak House what the play meant, Shaw replied: 'How should I know? I'm only the author.' Similarly, if you complain that no Roman Emperor ever spoke as Shaw's Emperor in *Androcles and the Lion*, he will answer that his Emperor speaks more truly than any real emperor because he speaks for all emperors, just as his martyrs are the martyrs of all time. And if you point out that as a historical play *Androcles and the Lion* is not historically true, Shaw will reply that 'the best dramatic art is the operation of a divinatory instinct for truth.' Or if you ask him what he means by his tale of *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God*, he can give you only his own account of the matter 'for what it is worth,' warning you that he is as liable as any one else to err in his interpretation, and that 'pioneer writers, like other pioneers, often mistake their destination as Columbus did.' But, he adds, enlisting more great names, 'I hold, as firmly as St. Thomas Aquinas, that all truths, ancient or modern, are divinely inspired; but I know by observation and introspection that the instrument on which the inspiring force plays may be a very faulty one, and may even end, like Bunyan in the Holy War, by making the most ridiculous nonsense of his message.'

To describe Bernard Shaw as a mystic, after having regarded him hitherto as a two-eyed Irish realist, involves no contradiction. A rational mystic is a perfectly possible person, being simply a person with a vision of the truth about life who insists that that vision shall be explicable in terms acceptable to his reason, and not in those which insult his intelligence by demanding the help of superstitions that normally could impose only on the village idiot. The mystical vision and the facts of experience must be made to fit each other without the help of mumbo-jumbo.

Shaw has always been aware of this kind of changeless vision, and of his possession of an inner light. Discussing the difference between his earlier and later work, he writes:

'Like Goethe, I knew all along, and have added more to my power of handling, illustrating, and addressing my material than to the material itself.' This changelessness is easily discernible in his works. For instance, exactly the same anti-romanticism which he preached in the nineteenth century through the chocolate-eating mouth of his Swiss soldier in *Arms and the Man* (six years, by the way, before Queen Victoria sent her soldiers in South Africa chocolates for Christmas), appears in the twentieth century in *Saint Joan*, which ends, not with the usual romantic glow of flames from the stake but with an anti-romantic top-hat from Rome. Strong aversion to the private doctor's vested interest in ill health enlivened *The Philanderer*, in the person of Dr. Paramour, in 1893; exactly the same aversion filled the full-dress debate of *The Doctor's Dilemma* in 1906, and survives unaltered in *Too True to be Good* and *The Millionairess* in 1936. Exactly the same philosophy that was enshrined in *Man and Superman* appears twenty years later in *Back to Methuselah*, and thirty-five years later in *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*; the difference between these plays being one of degree and address only, never one of substance. The furrows of conviction have only deepened the philosophy into a religion. *Lilith* and *Pra and Prola* succeed *Don Juan*, but all say the same thing. Again, when Shaw was struggling and obscure and red-bearded and had nothing to lose, he tub-thumped and helped to found the Socialist Fabian Society; and when he was famous, rich, and white-bearded, he toiled to write *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism*, to propagate those same Fabian doctrines.

It is politically, of course, that people like to think that Bernard Shaw changed, and became cosily conservative; and do what he will Shaw finds it hard to convince them that he is, as he was, a revolutionary. But he makes it as clear as he can. At a public meeting, for instance, a man got up shaking with anger and shouted at him: 'Are you a Bolshevik or are you not?' Shaw, folding his arms and smiling benignly, said: 'I am a Bolshevik.' Again, at the appearance of *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*, most people reacted as though someone

had hiccuped in polite society for a joke; that is, they disregarded the book and went on talking about the weather: others, who read the book, and took the author's sincerity for granted, felt that an elderly gentleman's solecism should be forgiven him, because, after all, it had been committed in senility: while the rest, just because the author had been considerate enough to make his exceedingly long book readable by sprinkling a heavy theme with wit and leavening a ton of text with an ounce of humour, found nothing in the book but a leg-pull, administered by someone who apparently had nothing better to do, and was obviously suffering from a severe attack of obstinacy. Similarly, because Shaw once exercised his talent for debate by writing a comedy in which a puppet king outwitted his puppet minister, the public jumped to the conclusion that he had turned Royalist and was liable to turn up in the Mall with a flag in his hand, to wave when next the King of England drove by; whereas, of course, *The Apple Cart* is important and suggestive chiefly for the peep it gives of its villain in the shape of *Breakages, Limited*.

That Shaw has had the good fortune to accumulate some money, and has the good sense to use and enjoy the amenities of the modern world, seems to prevent people from realizing that, simultaneously and with a quiet conscience, he can hold perfectly sincere political views which, put into effect, would change the whole order of society. But Shaw cannot perform miracles. Having expressed the opinion that it would be about as easy to get scrambled eggs from a sewing-machine as true Socialism from the English Labour Party, he is content to live as happily as he can in a society of whose structure he disapproves. Like a monetary reformer who gladly makes use of his cheque book and all the other conveniences afforded by the banking system, while ardently advocating the most radical alterations to that system, Shaw refuses to play the martyr, or to cut off his nose to spite his face, and insists on making the best of what is theoretically a bad job. Some Communists made the same mistake about Anatole France. They journeyed all the way from Paris to enlist his help, confident of the sympathy of one who had lashed Church



4 Whitehall Court, London
Bernard Shaw and his Secretary, Blanche Patch
'I must take myself as I am and get what work I can out of myself'

and Finance and all the other pillars of society with such Olympian authority. Alas, while waiting for the great Frenchman in an ante-room, they were so overcome by its evidences of wealth and culture that they fled precipitately and never saw him. Full Socialism cannot be practised except in a community of Socialists. A man who tried to practise it in a capitalist community, even if the law permitted, would be acting more like a sore thumb than a Socialist. The remedy is to be a Socialist on paper. The arm-chair Socialist can lacerate, pull down, and rebuild society to his heart's content. When Shaw is accused of arm-chair Socialism, or, by the more impatient of his brethren, of actual apostasy, to defend himself he takes refuge among the highest, thus: 'Even in Syria in the time of Jesus His teachings could not possibly have been realized by a series of independent explosions of personal righteousness on the part of the separate units of the population.' Moreover, the people who accuse Shaw of degenerating into an arm-chair critic forget that he was never anything else. They should note, however, that his arm-chair is a hard one, and always drawn up to his desk.

Shaw himself is as anxious as any one to dispel the illusion that he has become respectable, which he says is bad for the sale of his works. 'Nobody reads me,' he laments. 'They all regard me as a classic and treat me like an archbishop.' If this is true, if we have kicked Shaw upstairs into a sort of literary House of Lords, he must take what comfort he can from the fact that nowadays it is not the fashion to treat archbishops with respect; for, thanks partly to him, we no longer look upon our elders as our betters. Maybe, however, it is true that he is losing some of his power of irritating the public, of provoking it to thought, argument, and disagreement. The public is too used to him and can anticipate too closely what he will say. He has become approachable, it seems; and in his old age he looks strokable. To his mingled delight and horror he finds himself popular after a long period of unpopularity, like Queen Victoria. Now popularity is a serious matter to the rebel, for it cuts the ground from under his feet. When all agree with the rebel, from whom shall he rebel?

In any case I do not imagine that Shaw craves for popularity, or can thrive on it. Just as he realized that Joan the Maid's power was at its height when she was most dangerous and when the churchmen called her heretic and the soldiers had to burn her, so I imagine Bernard Shaw wrote feelingly when he made her say: 'Woe unto me when all men praise me!' But I do not think that Shaw need worry. He is popular only because he makes us laugh. His opinions about the serious things, such as war, love, private property, and religion, are still as unpopular to those in control of them as ever they were. As for the popularity or unpopularity of his message, the question has not yet arisen, because the people have not yet heard the message. And nothing, least of all the films, will ever bring it to them. They will have to go to it, and they will not do that until they are driven by affliction and despair, by which time it may be too late.

Success and security have, of course, exacted their toll from Bernard Shaw. He is but human. But it is difficult to imagine how any one could show their marks less. Security, or 'mortal's chiefest enemy,' as Shakespeare puts it, and success, as this world counts it, have come to Bernard Shaw in abundance, yet neither has spoilt him. To him, money has meant little but the mental freedom to work untrammelled by petty anxieties or by that spectre of insecurity, the Fear for To-morrow's Dinner. Nor has Shaw known idleness. Having contracted the habit of work in early manhood, he has never been able to break himself of it. But here our wretchedly inadequate vocabulary, suited only to the age of scarcity and its obsolescent economists, plays me false. For we still commonly mistake leisure for idleness. Leisure is not idleness, of course, but the opportunity, given by God and to be taken by man, of applying oneself to work, which is not less arduous or difficult for being gladly undertaken and voluntarily self-imposed. Like all great work, Shaw's has been accomplished in leisure. In the inadequate economic sense of the word, however, Shaw has never 'worked' since he stopped 'earning a living,' though it was only then that his real work began, out of hours and after 'retirement.'

Because his work was also a fight it was a joy to him. Past and future could take care of themselves; it was the present that mattered, the actual fight on hand, whatever it might be. To him, as to Bunyan's Christian, the journey was the thing. In the nineties he wrote: 'I dread success. To have succeeded is to have finished one's business on earth, like the male spider, who is killed by the female the moment he has succeeded in his courtship. I like a state of continual *becoming*, with a goal in front and not behind.' I suppose all of us feel like that; and I quote the passage, not because it is exceptional, but because it is a relief to find Shaw juxtaposing himself beside the humble spider instead of the usual Beethovens and Goethes.

Another thing about Bernard Shaw that never changes is his style. He writes for the moment only, and in the heat of that moment, maintaining that that is the only way to write for all time. In short, he is a journalist. If a writer is not a journalist, or ceases to be one, he is negligible. All the highest literature is journalism, he says; and what determines the artistic quality of a book is not so much the nature of the opinions it propagates as the fact that its writer has opinions. This disposes in a sentence of the Art for Art's Sake idea, and if it seems too sweeping it at least can call as witnesses most of the authors of that literary treasure house, the Bible. The prophets prophesied, or railed, or comforted, because they wanted to reach the hearts of the Children of Israel, not because they wanted to utter beautiful words. St. Paul wanted to convert the inhabitants of Greece and Asia Minor, not to write beautiful letters. And the more passionately they wanted to do these things, the more journalistically they wrote and spoke; such passages as the thirteenth chapter to the Corinthians, and the exhortation beginning: 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people,' being the result. Similarly, Solomon wrote or sang his Song because he was in love, not to compete for a university prize for poetry. Shaw uses other examples to illustrate his theme, as in the following passage, which I quote at some length as a good example of his journalistic style. 'The writer who aims at producing the platitudes which are "not for an age, but for all time" has his reward

in being unreadable in all ages; whilst Plato and Aristophanes trying to knock some sense into the Athens of their day, Shakespeare peopling the same Athens with Elizabethan mechanics and Warwickshire hunts, Ibsen photographing the local doctors and vestrymen of a Norwegian parish, Carpaccio painting the life of St. Ursula exactly as if she were a lady living in the next street to him, are still alive and at home everywhere among the dust and ashes of many thousands of academic, punctilious, most archaeologically correct men of letters and art who spent their lives haughtily avoiding the journalist's vulgar obsession with the ephemeral. I also am a journalist, proud of it, deliberately cutting out of my works all that is not journalism, convinced that nothing that is not journalism will live long as literature, or be of any use whilst it does live. I deal with all periods; but I never study any period but the present, which I have not yet mastered and never shall.' What attack! What clarity, and sense of ease in the handling of weapons! If this is journalism (and it is), no wonder Shaw cries: 'Let others cultivate what they call literature: journalism for me!'

If a literary artist or journalist, for these are one, writes as accurately and as effectively as he can, then his style will take care of itself—if he has anything to say. If he has nothing to say, he will have no style. 'Effectiveness of assertion is the alpha and omega of style,' declares Shaw. He preaches what he practises; for, always concerned only to see that his assertions are made as effectively as possible, he has never aimed at style in his life. This, however, is by no means to say that he, any more than any other disciplined writer, can do without rules. One of the first rules he adopted as a youthful writer of novels, was to avoid idiom like the plague, and to write nothing that would not be intelligible to a foreigner with a dictionary. Later, he abandoned that rule, having come to the conclusion that idiom was 'the most highly vitalized form of language.' And idiom and proverb he has since used accordingly, until these have become a characteristic of the Shavian style. It would for instance be a matter for surprise if any long, musical, and easy-flowing sentence, ending with the advice to somebody to 'keep his breath to cool his porridge,'

turned out not to be by Bernard Shaw. But all rules are adopted, or modified, or discarded, solely to make his material more effective, never to make it stylish.

In one other way Shaw will never change. He will always be a bit of an actor. We have seen how as a young man he had to decide between presenting a bold front to the world and going under, and we remember how he walked the Embankment for twenty minutes summoning up courage to ring the bell of the house where he was bidden to supper. Well, he decided not to go under. Accordingly he fashioned for himself a mask suitable for dealing with all kinds of people on all kinds of occasions. In thus becoming an actor by self-propulsion as it were, he discovered that he was already one by nature. The mask was gradually built up of prophet's beard, devil's tufts, and goat-god eyebrows; the result proving admirably suitable for the various parts he had to play as critic, dramatist, orator, revolutionary, or crank. As remarked before, the mask fitted so well that Shaw never removed it, and later, with habit, it became so much a part of him that he could not have removed it had he wished. He is still wearing it, therefore, and as a self-confessed 'natural born mountebank,' Shaw has long headlined as a free-lance world star. Under contract to no manager, he makes his appearances on the world's Variety Circuit when he pleases, always topping the bill, and always hailed with delight as a funny man. Footlights he regards as antiquated: the microphone for him. Why act before thousands when you can act before millions? Who but a born actor, revelling in a star part, and confident of his ability to give a brilliant, word-perfect performance, would dare to start a radio speech as follows: 'Your Majesties, your Royal Highnesses, Your Excellencies, your Graces and Reverences, my Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, fellow citizens of all degrees'? And who but a very good actor, with the inborn ability to pitch his material in the right key from the start, could have got away with it?

Shortly after the suspension of world war in 1918 Shaw essayed a new role: that of old man. His first appearance in it was on the publication of *Back to Methuselah*. 'My sands are running out; the exuberance of 1901 has aged

into the garrulity of 1920,' he laments, and goes on to plead that he is doing the best he can at his age. 'My powers are waning; but so much the better for those who found me unbearably brilliant when I was in my prime.' It was a piece of acting, I think, because more than a dozen new plays, Saint Joan among them, were to follow from his pen. But it was a useful piece of acting, because of all his plays *Back to Methuselah* conveys his message most fully, and if the pentalogy was not quite up to Shavian standard owing to its immensity of theme, Shaw, like an anxious parent, wanted to divert criticism from it to himself, and to maintain the prestige of his message was willing to cast aspersions on the messenger.

Yet behind these remarks there may have been more than the actor's plea for indulgence on account of age, for Shaw found that the dreadful time was not after eighty, but between fifty and sixty. 'You fear then that you may develop into a doddering idiot, fit material for elimination. But after that you seem to get your second childhood, your seventh wind. You have a delightful sense of freedom.' Few of us can argue with Shaw on these points, for he was a lad well over eighty when he made them. 'As you grow old,' he says, 'you grow too adventurous; you lose your sober sense of responsibility.' Thus, even at eighty he can still stand on his head, like Old Father William. And in that position, dignified by long use, he waggles his feet playfully in the air to prove that they, alone of all feet, are firmly and permanently planted on the ground.

Old at sixty or young at ninety, adventurous or responsible, Bernard Shaw has not changed. He is always the same in everything that matters. All his developments are reflections of his one first vision; all his plays form a cycle of mystical faith in which he proclaims that each one of us is a Man of Destiny, a servant of the Life Force, a temple of the Holy Ghost. He never lost his fire. Though in old age the flames died down to an occasional flicker, the fuel feeding them never varied. John Stewart Collis was correct in saying that whereas formerly Shaw's beard was red-hot with anger it was latterly white-hot with rage, and Mrs. Phillimore in calling Shaw 'an old tramcar, always on the same set of rails.'

CHAPTER XIV

IS BERNARD SHAW SERIOUS?

WHEN *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* was produced in New York in 1935, it was hailed by one of that discerning city's more intelligent critics, as the work of a dignified old monkey throwing coco-nuts at the public in pure senile devilment. In thus describing Bernard Shaw, the critic was reflecting, in an amusing but accurate way, the opinion of the world at large.

People simply will not take Shaw seriously. Yet, as indicated already in these pages, to be taken seriously is one of Shaw's chief aims and dearest cares. It is a laudable ambition, and still to be achieved, although Shaw himself could hardly be more unequivocal on the subject, as these samples of his utterances show.

'I care only for my mission as I call it, and my work.'

'No doubt that literary knack of mine which happens to amuse the British public distracts attention from my character; but the character is there none the less, solid as bricks.'

'My conscience is the genuine pulpit article: it annoys me to see people comfortable when they ought to be uncomfortable; and I insist on making them think in order to bring them to conviction of sin.'

Such remarks are to be found strewn through Shaw's works as plentifully as daisies in June. Their very profusion suggests that all his life Shaw has had to face a charge of wanton levity; and their assertiveness shows his anxiety to be quit of such a charge. Yet the impression that he will do or say anything to raise a laugh persists. Why is this? For he also gives the impression that he will do or say anything to counteract that impression. In the exercise of his literary gifts he must experience at least a craftsman's pleasure, just as a marksman enjoys scoring bull's-eyes at a rifle range; yet even that pleasure, natural and legitimate though it is, Shaw minimizes and puts second, in a desperate attempt to focus our attention on his

high purpose and serious-mindedness. 'Art for Art's sake is not enough,' he insists. 'No doubt I must recognize, as even the Ancient Mariner did, that I must tell my story entertainingly if I am to hold the wedding guest spellbound in spite of the siren sounds of the loud bassoon. But "for art's sake" alone I would not face the toil of writing a single sentence.' Art, craftsmanship, comedy, literature, these things are mere instruments and by-products, secondary and incidental: what matters is his message. Where the marksman scores bull's-eyes for the sheer joy of good marksmanship, Shaw scores them because behind each target he senses an enemy to be destroyed; with the result that he turns up at the rifle range, not as a simple marksman out for the fun of the thing, but as a cross between Don Quixote in modern dress and a sanitary exterminator, much to our amusement.

Are we to believe him when he declares himself an essentially serious person? If such a suggestion only makes us laugh all the more heartily, we must be prepared to face the fact that we are deliberately choosing to disbelieve the considered statements of a man who, in the teeth of opposition, has made it his special province to tell the truth, as he sees it, about this world and the people in it, more unvarnishedly, unreservedly, publicly, and unceasingly than any other person within living memory.

What is the trouble, then? Why do we not take Bernard Shaw as seriously as, say, the Hebrews took their prophets or the Florentines Savonarola? Clearly, I think, because Shaw, though always serious, is never solemn. Somehow we find it almost impossible to believe that any one can mean what he says unless he pulls a long face while saying it. Shaw not only pulls no long faces, but his most serious expression cannot banish for long that fatal twinkle in the eye, and when he opens his mouth he cannot prevent his tongue from being wittily unruly. Wit: that is the trouble. In both senses of the verb, Shaw suffers from wit. Constitutional and incorrigible wit has been his undoing; just as sometimes it has been his salvation. Savonarola, not being witty, was burnt alive by those whom his bludgeon hurt. Shaw, on the other hand, confesses that his mother wit has many times saved him from the stake's modern

equivalent. Such escapes, however, have had to be paid for, and in Shaw's case the price was high; for he has had to suffer the anguish of preaching, not to empty benches, but to packed congregations of deaf persons who came to church only to watch the funny preacher's antics and grimaces. Where he offers sermons they find only entertainments, and when he would administer mental and spiritual purgatives in the form of bitter pills considerably sugar-coated, what do the ungrateful people do but enjoy the sugar and refuse the pill? The sugar alone, they say, is worth the price of admission. Having paid the piper, they imagine the notes of their favourite tune in whatever the piper plays. Thus *Back to Methuselah* is remembered chiefly for its Serpent and its length, or for its portraits of Asquith and Lloyd George; *Pygmalion* for its 'Not bloody likely!'; Mrs. Warren's Profession for being banned for so long; *Fanny's First Play* for the trimmings of its prologue and epilogue; *Candida* for its scene of Prossy tipsy; *Arms and the Man* for being a sort of unmusical version of a musical comedy called *The Chocolate Soldier*; and so on. Poor Shaw! The Prophet Jeremiah lamented that the Children of Israel had come to regard him only 'as one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument.' The Prophet Shaw knows just how he felt.

What I am trying to say has been sharpened once for all to a point of concise lucidity by Professor Ifor Evans. 'Shaw's message,' he says, 'would have been clearer if the wit had been less.'

Though Shaw's voice may be pleasanter than Jeremiah's, the things he says with it are rarely pleasant. His views are never popular, his opinions never orthodox, his convictions never conventional. If they were, they would be out of date; and that is something a self-confessed heretic like Shaw can never afford to be, because the heretic is no longer a heretic when all believe in his heresy. The heretic, the reformer, the prophet, the revolutionary must always march ahead of the times, never with them. That is their function. And if they are successful they will be duly stoned, burnt, hanged, imprisoned, or banned, according to the age and place they live in. Nor will they escape these

fates unless they happen to possess, as Shaw possesses, in addition to disturbing visions and iconoclastic zeal, the specific artistic talent of the mountebank. Then they will be spared, as Shaw has been spared, because the mountebank's amusing antics divert the mob's attention from the reformer's dangerous preachings, and if the mob by any chance does pay attention to these, the mountebank instinctively makes the kind of answer that turns away the wrath they would otherwise arouse.

In Shaw's plays the mountebank in him takes the part of imp, and a prominent part it is. He appears in every play. Sir James Barrie was also possessed of an imp, but his was elfin rather than mountebank. Describing how his plays came to be written, Barrie pictured himself, pen in hand, plodding away prosaically, when all of a sudden there would come to him another being, distinct and yet of himself, who would take complete charge of the situation and proceed to write the famous Barrie whimsicalities while Barrie held the pen. Barrie and his elf were great friends. Indeed, the Scot felt so grateful and indebted to the little creature that he acknowledged it publicly by name, and called it Maconachie. Shaw's imp, on the other hand, has not been christened, at any rate publicly, since it is doubtful whether its host will feel at all indebted to it when all the accounts are balanced. For Shaw candidly confesses his inability to sustain a period of tragic writing, or even serious writing, beyond a certain point. At that point the imp, whom we may call Joey the Clown, seizes hold of him in the form of an irresistible impulse to end the whole thing in a joke. No sooner are Shaw and the Tragic Muse comfortably in session than Joey starts knocking on the door. Perhaps he is jealous. Whatever the reason, Bernard Shaw always lets him in. The result is that even his unpleasant plays have to be specifically labelled Unpleasant lest the brilliance of their comedy should mask their real import, which is, of course, an unpleasant and essentially serious one. Typical of the way Joey skips through the plays crying 'Hold, enough!' whenever he comes across a passage of deep feeling, is Caesar's salutation to the Sphinx in *Caesar and Cleopatra*. After Caesar has spoken for some

minutes in a vein of grave beauty suitably attuned to the moonlit night and the silence of the desert, Cleopatra addresses him as 'Old gentleman!' The effect, of course, is very funny, but is achieved at the expense of all the gravity and beauty that have gone before. Atmosphere and illusion dissolve, and Caesar's speech topples down at Cleopatra's remark like a house of cards. This sort of thing is called the Shavian touch: but the hand is the hand of Joey.

Joey has much to answer for. The child, not so much of Shaw as of Shaw's father, in whom an irreverent derisive iconoclasm and a sense of the ridiculous were developed to an exceptional degree, Joey is Shaw's inheritance, the lodger for life he can never evict. Sometimes he regrets his company: 'Some people are born with a terrible desire to be laughed at: this has prevented me from becoming a great author.' Sometimes he uses him for odd jobs: 'Whenever I feel in writing a play that my great (*sic*) command of the sublime threatens to induce solemnity in my audience, I at once introduce a joke and knock the solemn people from their perch.' And sometimes, when the real Shaw nods, Joey gets completely out of hand. In other words, on occasions, happily rare, Shaw has been guilty of a rudeness and a lack of decency so appalling as to be explicable only on the assumption that the real Shaw slept while Joey took charge. How else explain the cable, for example, to The New York World on the death of Arnold Daly, an actor—admittedly not a teetotal one—to whom as Shavian performer and producer Shaw was much beholden? 'Impossible not to be interested in poor Daly's extraordinary death. Cases of spontaneous combustion are very rare. Bernard Shaw,' the cable read. No one was amused.

Shaw's tear ducts and lachrymose glands are presumably fashioned like other people's, but they do not operate from the same causes, and when others cry Shaw remains dry-eyed. Tragedy does not move him merely because it is tragic. At his mother's funeral, for instance, he is reputed to have joked with Granville-Barker; while the tragedies of wars were to him primarily tragedies of stupidity, of loss in the sense of waste, and as such they made him angry and

want to curse, not cry. Of course, what are tragedies to other people, often are not tragedies to Shaw; funerals, for example; but that does not affect the point, which is simply that Shaw does not weep when other people weep. 'Sorrow does not make me cry,' he says, 'even when it is real.' The only thing that can bring tears to his eyes is the sensation or apprehension of perfection, the sight of something beautifully done; and in the fact that he can be touched in that way lies his whole claim to be a critic of art.

Somehow one feels that Bernard Shaw is so sensitive to beauty that excess of it is apt to embarrass him. Beauty affects people in different ways. A friend of mine, for instance, was so overcome by the beauty of the interior of Milan Cathedral, which at dawn he had found fortunately empty, that he was physically sick. The cathedral got him, as the saying goes. I do not wish to involve Bernard Shaw in the nervous reflexes of my friend or of any one else, but I cannot help feeling, if he were to show Joey the door and write a play of jokeless, undiluted seriousness and beauty, that when he had finished it he would find himself blushing. Beauty can take such hold of those who are sensitive to its appeal that it must be kept at a safe distance and taken in small doses if its votary or victim is to keep his powers of reasoning and judgment clear. Almost as a safeguard from too much beauty and its disturbances, then, Shaw seems to take refuge in a kind of cold derision, and to behave in all emotional matters as a Laodicean rather than an impotent.

Moreover, he takes delight in extending his derision to all those simple, traditional things and customs which normally move men to emotion. Whether it be the ceremonies attending the mysteries of birth and death, or the sacraments of kingship and marriage, or the observance of birthdays, his own or Christ's, or merely the cheering of a crowd in the distance or the unfurling of a flag, that these are commonly matters for emotion is enough to impel Shaw to deride them. But the man who scoffs at the traditional things which men, rightly or wrongly, hold sacred, and which, because they are held sacred, are the source and fount of communal emotion, is not the man to write high tragedy, except about things understandable only by

himself. For what is tragedy but the profanation of things held sacred? If nothing is regarded as sacred, then there is nothing left to profane. Shaw is aware of the handicaps he suffers as a writer from his incorrigible impulse to deride. Criticizing the author of his own first play, *Widowers' Houses*, he admits that 'the disillusion which makes all great dramatic poets tragic has here made him only derisive; and derision is by common consent a baser atmosphere than that of tragedy.' Not only baser, but sterile too. In that freezing atmosphere laughter may resound and ring, but it rings hollow, tickling everything and healing nothing.

When Shaw threw overboard the stage's stock figures of romance, those he offered in their place, while interestingly real and human, were not 'nice'; any more than live people are 'nice' when exposed or dissected. To make them as palatable as possible, therefore, it was necessary to allow Joey full rein, with the result that the author's main meaning was obscured in proportion as the audience laughed. For the audience, hopelessly at sea, clutched hold of Joey whenever he appeared as though he were a lifebelt, and on being assured by him that the new stage figures were only figures of fun (didn't Joey guarantee their laughter-provoking powers?), sighed with relief. If the author was joking, all was well; not only need he not be taken seriously, but he could also be forgiven, because though he had outraged the conventions he had done so only in fun. To this attitude Shaw could only reply in despair that, since they would have it so, he was only joking. But he was careful to add, through the mouthpiece of Peter Keegan: 'My way of joking is to tell the truth: it's the funniest joke in the world.' Similarly, people who ask whether Shaw is pulling their legs can be assured that he is pulling them hard; but only because he thinks they are crooked and need pulling straight.

Joey's impishness and Shaw's derisiveness joined forces with chortling glee in a play that so far has never been written. Offering the plot to any one who cared to use it, Shaw described a world so far in the future that it has forgotten how to make war. When England, therefore,

either because she is becoming flabby or for some other reason wishes to go to war, her Cabinet decide to employ a medium to raise the spirit of the Unknown Soldier in Westminster Abbey, and find out from him how the thing should be done. The spirit is duly raised, the Unknown Soldier materializing in the most up-to-date ectoplasm, and is asked how war was waged in the olden days. He answers in German! Now that is a joke in bitter taste; and no one would appreciate it simply as a joke more than Shaw the Derider. But if he decided to write a play around that joke, its message, judging from his other plays, would be an intensely serious one.

Having come to some sort of conclusion, then, that Bernard Shaw is intellectually honest rather than personally conceited, that he is reasonably consistent, and, although misunderstood owing to his wit, handicapped through his derisiveness, and led astray by Joey the Clown, that he is essentially a serious person, the next question follows naturally. What is it that this honest, consistent, and serious person is so honest, consistent, and serious about?

Luckily Shaw is concise and explicit on the point. Before hearing him, however, it is well to understand the meaning of such words as 'moral' and 'immoral' as he uses them. Shaw attaches to these words, not their specialized meaning concerning the relations between the sexes in particular, but their full classical meaning concerning the manners, habits, customs, conventions, and institutions of humanity in general. Thus when he speaks of Luther's 'revolting immorality' in not only marrying when he was a priest but in actually marrying a nun, he does not mean that Luther was a bad lot and guilty of disgusting licentiousness: he means literally what he writes; namely that Luther revolted against the then prevalent custom, or morality, of celibacy for priests. Similarly, a moral man is not simply one who forbears to run off with his neighbour's wife, but one who abides by the general rules and customs imposed on him by the laws and social conventions of his time and country. In proportion as he fails to abide by these, so he becomes immoral, for whatever is contrary to established customs is immoral. An immoral act or attitude is not therefore

necessarily a sinful one. On the contrary, every advance in thought and conduct is immoral until the majority has subscribed to it. So when Shaw declares himself 'a moral revolutionary' he is not hoisting the libertine's flag: he is simply revolting against all custom which has not the sanction of conscience; all habits which are based either on a false perception of life or on a refusal to face life; all laws which have outgrown the conditions for which they were made; and all society's institutions which support or countenance such customs, habits, and laws. If that be so, the reader may say that the moral revolutionary has his work cut out. He has. His study of mankind is nothing short of man; of natural man in his relation to society; of man as God intended him to be, contrasted with man as he has fallen short of that stature.

With this comprehensive view of the moral revolutionary in mind, we can understand better what Bernard Shaw meant when he wrote to H. M. Hyndman, and in the following terms declined that Socialist leader's invitation to take an active part in the class war: 'I am a moral revolutionary, interested, not in class war, but in the struggle between human vitality and the artificial system of morality, and distinguishing not between capitalist and proletarian, but between moralist and natural historian.' The fight, in short, is between Custom and Conscience, with Shaw fighting for the latter. Referring to what might be called Shaw's guerrilla actions in this fight, William James once said: 'To me, Shaw's great service is the way he brings home to the *eyes*, as it were, the difference between convention and conscience, and the way he shows that you can tell the truth successfully if you will only keep benignant enough while doing it.'

Now that we have an inkling of what Shaw is after, we can return with profit to his plays. Strip them of wit, cast out Joey the Clown, and what is left? All that matters: namely, a body of revolutionary criticism aimed at all our most cherished social institutions with the object of altering them. For what purpose? So that after alteration they may fit Conscience instead of Custom. Customs grow stale, laws obsolete, conventions meaningless. Yet we

persist in observing them long after their usefulness is past. They are dead, and in reverencing them we are dealing with death instead of life. If they are not buried when they are dead they become fetters, holding man back and hampering him in his journey towards godhead and the life more abundant. It is from these dead tyrannies that Shaw would deliver us, as a good forester strips a tree of the ivy strangling it. It is life that matters: nothing else. And life is dynamic, never static; ever changing, never still. Let men and women, then, open their gates and the windows of their souls to the New and to the Changing, and let the spirit of revolt and heresy and immorality blow freely through the rooms of their minds, for in these is life. And to make way for these, let them first throw out their dead, ruthlessly and, in a very real sense, religiously. To use one of Shaw's favourite metaphors, we must be careful to empty out our dirty water before pouring in our clean.

We are no longer surprised, therefore, when Bernard Shaw describes as follows his career and his purpose as a playwright. 'I am not an ordinary playwright in general practice. I am a specialist in immoral and heretical plays.' Seeing that this statement was addressed to the Lord Chamberlain's Department, we can imagine the impish glee with which he chose and penned its strictly accurate and perfectly serious wording. Continuing, he says: 'I write plays with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinion in these matters. I have no other effectual incentive to write plays, as I am not dependent on the theatre for my livelihood. If I were prevented from producing immoral and heretical plays, I should cease to write for the theatre, and propagate my views from the platform and through books.' He could hardly have made his position clearer.

Instead of regarding the plays, then, as mere vehicles for jokes, or as acrobatic spectacles with most of the characters on their heads and the arguments turning cartwheels, we must regard them as essentially serious attacks upon society. Looked at from their author's standpoint, therefore, the plays range not from farce to near tragedy, or from comedy to melodrama, but rather from slum-landlordism to mili-

tarism, from prostitution to marriage, from husband-hunting to politics, from professional tyrannies to totalitarian tyrannies, from the Crosstianity that passes for Christianity to questions of conscience and Creative Evolution. Indeed, so wide is their range that only one corner of our institutions has he not attacked: the corner of Finance, which some would call the very foundation of modern society, and with this strange omission we shall have to deal when discussing Shaw as an economist.

In practice, any attack on society becomes an attack on its ideals, and it is these which Shaw tries to undermine and knock down. He is against idealism because he is all for realism. Thus a million marriages, say, do not bring into existence a mysterious thing called the ideal of marriage. There is no such thing; it is an abstraction, a romance. There are a million marriages, that is all. Each is different from the rest, each separate, each real. Every marriage must therefore be treated as a special marriage, or a special case, and the couple contracting it must live within its bond (itself suitably modified) or break it according to the dictates of conscience and nature, not according to laws and conventions relating to an ideal which has no existence. The successful marriage is achieved only by the process of trial and error. Everything, in short, should be judged on its merits, and the only fixed rule is that there is no fixed rule. (It is in this sense, by the way, that Shaw is an anarchist, or person who advocates, not absence of government, but government by self-control, from within; in other senses he is not only anarchist but archarchist.) In Shaw's eyes the idealism he found in life and the romanticism he found on the stage had one factor in common: both were false. Describing idealism as 'only a flattering name for romance in ethics and religion,' he is convinced that the tragedy and comedy of life are 'the consequences, sometimes terrible, sometimes ludicrous, of our attempts to found our institutions on the ideal suggested to our imaginations by our half-satisfied passions, instead of on a genuinely scientific natural history.'

In this connection it is interesting to note that in 1934, when he paid his first and only visit to America, Shaw spoke

as a pioneering scientific natural historian, not as a dramatist or comedian. In other words, for his only lecture in America he chose the subject of political science.

Historical examples of idealism depend for their survival largely on the fact that distance lends enchantment to the view. Shaw attacks idealism by obliterating this distance, a feat he accomplishes by putting his historical characters not under a microscope but under a telescopic lens.

In this way Shaw brings the past before the bar of contemporary judgment, where the heroes whom time and distance have idealized stand stripped, and are seen to be human beings like ourselves. Ancient problems become present problems, and yesterday is made intelligible in the light of to-day. Thus in the popular imagination Napoleon lives encrusted with a hundred years' growth of romance and idealization, until he is either an impossible demigod or an equally impossible ogre: but Shaw's *Man of Destiny* is a very modern practical and understandable human being. In the same way time has romanticized the Holy Inquisition into an assembly of archfiends in human shape: but Shaw's *Inquisitor* is a kindly old gentleman, learned, wise, and experienced, who behaves very like an English Lord Chief Justice. Again, Roman emperors have been swollen by time into monsters of tyranny: but Shaw's *Emperor in Androcles and the Lion* behaves no more and no less tyrannically than a Home Secretary or monarch of to-day. Whether dealing with history or not, Shaw's method is always the same; to him a prize-fighter, for instance, is not a knight-errant whose autograph must be secured at all costs, but 'a disillusioned man of business trying to make money at a certain weight.'

This power of destroying illusions and of robbing history of its glamour is Shaw's most effective weapon for his attack on society. He does not permit us to indulge in the rosy luxury of complacent self-righteousness. Nor does he let us forget that we would have voted for the burning of Joan had we been living in her day, just as we would now be voting for its equivalent had she been living in ours. For all our boast of progress and enlightenment, the modern world has its tortures not a whit less cruel than the old ones,

superstitions not a whit less credulous, intolerances not a whit less bigoted, and stupidities not a whit less crass. Our fears and prejudices against the light still burn the Maid and crucify Christ daily.

But if we are as bad as the so-called villains of history, those villains are no worse than the good men of to-day. It is not the evil done by our handfuls of criminals, which, after all, is easily identifiable and therefore largely preventable, but that done by our armies of good men, by idealists, by society, by vested interests and governments and churches, that is appalling. All such evil is done, of course, in the name of honour and tradition, patriotism and idealism, law and order. We have no right, Shaw declares, 'to regard Annas and Caiaphas as worse men than the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Headmaster of Eton. If Jesus had been indicted in a modern court, he would have been examined by two doctors; found to be obsessed by a delusion; declared incapable of pleading; and sent to an asylum: that is the whole difference.' To drive home a point of this sort Shaw invariably uses the same technique. He first chooses some character from history, for preference a highly infamous one, then picks out his or her modern counterpart, for preference someone highly respected, brackets them together, and holds up the pair of them as a warning for all time.

As he strips, so he reveals. And in revealing, he brings realities not only to light, but to life. With certain awkward realities, duly embalmed in the pleasant spices of romantic idealism after being supposed long dead, Shaw behaves like a body-snatcher. He explains, of course, that he is really behaving like a body-saver, and that the supposedly dead is really very much alive. Before you can stop him, he will dip up the seeming corpse, strip it of its sweet-smelling cerements, and pump into it the breath of present parallels and modern instances. Whereupon the corpse, surely enough, comes shockingly to life, and all respectable, law-abiding, church-going people are appalled to find it not only alive but still challenging and full of fight. For instance, pious people were shocked when Shaw described the Crucifixion as 'a complete political success.' Nor were

they appeased when he explained that he was 'treating the Crucifixion as an ordinary event like Home Rule or the Insurance Act; that is, as a real event which had really happened, instead of a portion of the Church service.' It was all very disturbing, they felt, and highly improper. But, to Shaw's mind, so was the Crucifixion.

Perhaps one of the principal reasons why people maintain that Shaw is not serious is that they are frightened of where his views would lead them, if once they took him seriously and acted on those views. For the results of such action would undoubtedly be as uncomfortable as those, say, following obedience to such commands as, 'Love one another,' and 'Take no thought for the morrow.' And if there is one thing people dislike it is discomfort, especially of the mind. Again, if one takes Shaw seriously, but disagrees with him, one must be prepared to refute him in argument, and few of us have time or talent enough to engage in such combat, Shaw being a man mighty in words. The easiest way out, both for those who are afraid they might agree with him and for those who know they disagree with him, is stoutly to deny his capacity to be serious.

It is frequently urged against Shaw as a playwright that all his characters talk like Bernard Shaw. In one sense they do; they all talk the language of reality. And it is the importance Shaw attaches to reality that makes, perhaps more than anything else, the answer to the question 'Is Bernard Shaw Serious?' an emphatic and undoubting 'Yes.' For the most serious and exciting thing in life to Bernard Shaw is the reality of life—past, present, and future. The witty playwright, as well as the Puritan critic, finds that 'life is real, life is earnest.'

CHAPTER XV

A RELIGIOUS MAN

It would be incorrect to suppose Bernard Shaw irreligious simply because he declared himself an atheist before the Shelley Society as a young man, or because he declines to go to church on Sunday: as incorrect as to suppose that an army recruit who puts down C. of E. in the religion column of his enlistment papers is necessarily religious. The recruit sure to be religious in some degree is the one with the temerity to write himself down an atheist; for that would show that he had at least wrestled with God enough to deny Him, and had not merely taken Him for granted or ignored Him. It would show, too, that he had the spiritual vitality, as he looked at the world and the universe beyond it, at least to face the eternal question, 'What the devil does it all mean?' even if he could find only a negative answer.

Behind every fight is a faith, and the faith behind Shaw's fight is a fervent belief in what he calls Creative Evolution. His creed is briefly this. There is a spiritual power in the universe; call it the Life Force. About its origin we know nothing. It is neither all-powerful nor all-knowing, but strives to become both through its own creations. It goes slowly forward by a process of trial and error. Man is the latest trial. He may be an error. But he is not a base accident of nature.

Now Darwin, or rather the metaphysicians and philosophers who took notice of Darwin's observations in the field of natural history, concluded that man *was* a base accident of nature. Strangely enough, they came to this conclusion with the greatest pleasure and relief. To find the explanation of this surprising attitude, and to learn how Shaw, one-time atheist, came to embrace Creative Evolution as his faith, a short survey of the history of the general idea of evolution must be made.

It was the fashion when Shaw was a young man for the more daringly advanced free-thinkers to offer to stand up,

their watches in their hands, and challenge God to prove His existence by striking them dead within five minutes. Shaw, who had given up saying his prayers long before he left Ireland because he had decided that he could no longer be intellectually honest with himself if he continued them, was of this enterprising band. Duly he offered to stand up and to take out his watch, thereby proving himself once for all an essentially religious man. For religion, so often confused with emotional crises and ecstatic experiences commonly arising from the unsatisfied yearnings of sex, is, by derivation, a binding back. It is a passionate desire to bind oneself back to, or relate oneself to, the universe about one. It is the urge to trace one's spiritual connections, to discover one's spiritual roots. Only the irreligious are content to be rootless; and proudly but vainly they go through life trying to be spiritually sufficient to themselves. Religious people, on the other hand, want to feel that they are parts of a whole; not only members one of another, but all children of the same eternal Father.

When you give God five minutes in which to strike you dead, you are not challenging God, of course, but only a conception of Him. For God is only a name we give to the Permanent Reality that lies hidden behind the seeming reality of life, behind the seeming existence of matter that passes away, and beyond the ridiculously short range of our present apprehensions and senses. But although we can never on earth fully apprehend God, yet out of the necessity of our souls' hunger we are always trying to, with the result that our conception, or portrait, while a very poor likeness of God, is a very good likeness of ourselves. And as we change, so our picture of God changes, man outgrowing the pictures as a boy outgrows his clothes. God does not change; only our picture of Him changes, and in time the God of our fathers is no longer good enough for us; nor, sometimes, bad enough. When men are at war, for instance, God at once becomes the God of battles, a tribal partisan. By their gods ye shall know them. Always the picture is painted in man's image. That is why we have never been able to comprehend, much less live up to, St. John's affirmation that God is a Spirit, or, as the Church of

England's Articles of Religion put it, that God is 'without body, parts, or passions.' Burdened with these ourselves, we cannot help putting them into the picture although we know quite well they have no place there. The difficulty, religiously speaking, of binding our three-dimensional selves back to a God of ∞ dimensions or perhaps no dimensions at all, is such that it is unlikely that our portrait of God will bear any recognizable resemblance to the original, until man also is wholly Spirit.

The picture which Bernard Shaw and others offered to defy was the popular one of an anthropomorphic God with plenty of parts and passions. God, in short, was still Jehovah, that past-master in wrath and vengeance; or, as Shaw describes him, 'a thundering, earthquaking, famine striking, pestilence launching, blinding, deafening, killing, destructively omnipotent Bogey Man.' Simultaneous belief in an all-loving Father with an all-loving Son was by no means so impossible as it seems, especially on Sundays and when the sun shone, because although people thought about these things they thought about them vaguely, rarely reaching any logical conclusion. Rather than bear the burden of thorough thought, with its possible reward of nothing but a sterile atheism or agnosticism, people believed anything they were told to believe, provided it was respectable and fashionable and did not interfere with their conduct on weekdays. And behind this inert mass of loose thinking, and lack of thinking, was the far from inert idea that pain and poverty, cruelty and suffering, deformity and misfortune were all part of God's bounty, bestowed lovingly for their unfortunate recipients' good. In this belief did fathers beat their children and schoolmasters their pupils, and, taking their cue from the Bogey Man, insist that they hurt themselves more than their victims. In this belief, too, even church and industry were able to shake hands upon the proposition that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds, so that it was not out of place for the Reverend J. Townsend, for instance, to object to the relief of the poor because it 'destroyed the harmony and beauty, the symmetry and order of that system which God and Nature have established in the world.' He added: 'Hunger

is not only a peaceable, silent, unremitted pressure, but, as the most natural motive to industry, calls forth the most powerful exertions.'

The use of the past tense in the preceding paragraph is not intended to flatter the twentieth century at the expense of the nineteenth, or to imply the dethronement of Jehovah. He exists, of course, in countless homes to-day. People, for example, who refuse to allow their children to be operated on for hare-lip on the ground that what God has deformed must not be re-formed, believe in Him; people who regard earthquakes and shipwrecks and similar calamities as the instruments of Divine punishment, believe in Him; people who talk about tempting Providence, and mean it, believe in Him; just as do those who pray for rain, as though God withheld water from the earth in order to show off His omnipotence, or had forgotten to turn on some celestial shower-tap and needed to be reminded and besought.

So much for the majority, in all ages. The minority, on the other hand, could find no peace of mind until they had satisfied both their intellects and consciences by thinking out this problem of God to as near its end as their experience and reasoning would take them. To such, the kind of sentiment expressed by Mr. Townsend was blasphemy against all decency and goodness, and they felt it impossible not to agree with Shelley that God was an Almighty Fiend. For coining so apt and pungent an expression, by the way, the poet was asked to remove himself from Oxford.

It was the Almighty Fiend that Shaw and other free-thinkers offered to challenge. And it was from the Almighty Fiend that Darwin rescued them intellectually. For the great naturalist's *Origin of Species* (published in 1859 when Bernard Shaw was three years old) showed that the development and survival of life on this planet, as well as all the happenings attendant thereon, could be explained without the help or hindrance of any God at all. Darwin's theory in brief, if we use the familiar illustration of the giraffe, was that if your neck was not long enough to reach your food, you died. That (with all its implications) and no more was Darwin's discovery. If your neck is too short, you pass away as simply and quickly as hundreds of

thousands of species must have passed away during the aeons of the earth's existence. The earth sustains only those forms of life which happen to suit it. Blind, accidental, and automatic, the process needs no intervention by any God whatsoever to make it work. Natural, or Circumstantial, Selection, as it was called, was a grim theory, but it held water. Best of all, it banished the Almighty Fiend. For the Fiendish picture of God had become more impossible and undesirable than ever. Not only was the Fiend undesirable from the humane point of view as a cruel and vindictive God, but in an age of science, which required for the exactness of its measurements and reasoning a background of, above all things, orderliness, an omnipotent Fiend who could stop the sun in the valley of Ajalon while his henchman won a battle for him, and could therefore presumably strike a man dead in five minutes if he wanted to, loomed larger and larger as a disorderly and capricious God. In short, he was an unscientific God: and, as such, incredible.

Great was the relief when Darwin showed that the world could do without the Fiend. As Shaw puts it, there was a sort of 'scientific mafficking.' It was Samuel Butler who first raised his hand to quell the tumult of joy. He asked whether people were not being somewhat premature in their rejoicing. Darwin, he declared, had 'banished Mind from the universe.' Sobered, men found that it was so. In banishing the Fiend they had banished everything that made life worth living; all love, all decency, all hope, all moral purpose, and all will, except the blind brute will to survive. Life shrank into a mean chapter of senseless accidents. Design gave place to chaos, shape to an empty void, and light to darkness. The glib phrase, 'Survival of the Fittest,' turned out on examination to be the survival of the cunningest, the brawniest, and the greediest. Darwin and his followers had indeed emptied out the baby with the bath-water. It was as though men had rushed down a steep place in a delirium of joy at their delivery from the Almighty Fiend, and had been brought up short by the realization that they were standing on the brink of a bottomless pit. In it they saw neither salvation nor even damnation, neither free will nor determinism, but only no will

and a black fatalism. Recoiling from the sight as from a brutal blasphemy, Shaw was moved to fervent protest. If Circumstantial Selection is a truth of science and the meaning of life, then, he declared, 'the stars of heaven, the showers and dew, the winter and summer, the fire and heat, the mountains and hills, may no longer be called on to exalt the Lord with us by praise: their work is to modify all things by blindly starving and murdering everything that is not lucky enough to survive in the universal struggle for hogwash.'

'Thus,' he continues, 'did the neck of the giraffe reach out across the whole heavens and make men believe that what they saw there was the gloaming of the gods.' Was there no escape from the dreadful dilemma, one horn of which was the acceptance of a life more futile than death, and the other the Fiend's recall and re-enthronement? Which was worse, a cruel God with a vindictive purpose and a capricious will, or no God and no purpose and no will? Was there no other escape, no second alternative? There was.

The idea of evolution, far from being introduced by Darwin, was as old as Aristotle when he classed together as blood relations all animals with backbones; indeed older, for every stock-breeder, pigeon-fancier, and gardener had practised evolution every time they had tried to improve the strain of their flocks and herds or to produce a new variety of vegetable or flower. But it was only towards the end of the eighteenth century that evolution, with the help of the microscope, became incontrovertible as a scientific fact, and it was upon this firm foundation that metaphysicians began to build evolution into a philosophy in the nineteenth century, and atheists and free-thinkers to find in it a religion and a faith. Thus in 1830 Goethe divined that all creatures had proceeded from a common stock, and that they had been differentiated by their various environments; and none other than Charles Darwin's grandfather, Erasmus, had written: 'The world has been evolved, not created: it has arisen little by little from a small beginning, and has increased through the activity of the elemental forces embodied in itself, and so has grown rather than come into being at an almighty word.'

So far, it is the How; the Why is missing. It was found by Lamarck, a French soldier of Napoleon's day. Like Darwin who followed him half a century later, Lamarck was concerned not so much with adding to the evidential facts of evolution as with trying to explain why they occurred; and, like Darwin's, his explanation was a very simple one. It was nothing more, but nothing less, than that all living organisms changed *because they wanted to*. The giraffe had grown his neck by *willing* it. Old organs could be and had been discarded because their owners had no longer any use for them, just as new organs could be and had been developed because they were wanted and needed. All that was necessary was a passionate desire for the change, and a continuous willing for it until it happened.

Lamarck did not banish Mind from the universe. On the contrary, he invested Life with it. Every process of life, every tissue of life, every cell he invested with will, purpose, design, and hope. The difference between Lamarckianism and Darwinism is the difference between light and darkness, between life and death, between good and evil. For Lamarck left man his soul. More than that, he gave a soul to every living thing. Where there is life there is will, and where there's a will there's a way. It was at the flame of this old proverb, which embodies all that a layman need know of Lamarckianism, that Shaw and the other Vitalists kept the torch of life and hope alight when Darwinism threatened to extinguish it. In the ensuing battle between the combatants, who called themselves Neo-Lamarckians and Neo-Darwinians, Bernard Shaw took an active part, and the Neo-Darwinians were chased from the field pursued by Shavian invective. To-day the smoke has cleared, and the Neo-Lamarckian calls himself a Creative Evolutionist.

A place in this sequence of events is due also to Henri Bergson, Shaw's junior by three years and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature for 1927. For it was after Butler had purged evolutionary philosophy of its Neo-Darwinian pessimism that Bergson, an optimist, injected the invalid with the hopeful conception of an *Élan Vital*

and invented the phrase which Shaw, bringing into action his biggest guns, made familiar if not popular in its English form of Life Force. 'Life Force' and 'Creative Evolution' formed the foundations of the new religion's terminology.

So much for a branch of mainly Victorian history. As a religion, Creative Evolution appeals to Shaw because he finds it intellectually credible. It appeals to him, too, because, for him at any rate, it is scientific. For him there is no rift between religion and science, Creative Evolution being a solvent for both. It does not explain everything, it is true; if it did, the Creative Evolutionist would be omniscient, and not even the Life Force is that. For we must remember that the Life Force, which by definition is the spiritual power behind evolution, moves forward stumblingly, gropingly, and slowly, by fits and starts between long intervals of gestation and quiescence, and cannot exceed the pace of its own creations, which are its only instruments of expression. 'If we could only realize,' Shaw remarks, 'that though the Life Force supplies us with its own purpose it has no other brains to work with than those it has painfully and imperfectly evolved in our heads, the peoples of the earth would learn some pity for their gods.' Neither omniscient nor omnipotent, the Life Force proceeds by trial and error. It is not sightless so much as moving in darkness, with the result that it often hits its head, turns up blind alleys, and in general makes mistakes.

Looked at in this way, many problems become understandable, if not immediately soluble: the problem of evil, for example. For if all our crimes and cruelties and calamities are in truth errors, or gropings, or unintentional accidents, then all malice is banished from the universe. The Mind may be slow and dull and clumsy, but at least it is not malicious, and what we call evils are seen only as happenings which the Life Force regrets as much as we do, but which it cannot prevent until we help it to prevent them, since we and it are one, indivisibly embarked in a co-operative alliance on the same long, adventurous, and untrod journey. Similarly pain and suffering, though still real, can perhaps be borne with less revulsion and anger if

we can be sure that they are not deliberately inflicted as pious punishments by an Almighty Schoolmaster, or out of sheer lust for cruelty by an Almighty Fiend.

Just as Creative Evolution satisfies Shaw because it can explain such problems as those of sin and suffering without resort to evasion or dogma, and without doing violence to his intelligence, so it also satisfies his religious urge to relate himself to all living things by making him a member 'of a fellowship in which we are all equal and members one of another before the judgment seat of our common father.' If these words of Shaw's are reminiscent of religions other than Creative Evolution, he is quick to point that there is no question of a new religion, but only of 'redistilling the eternal spirit of religion and thus extricating it from the sludgy residue of temporalities and legends that are making belief impossible, though they are the stock-in-trade of all the Churches and all the schools.' There is only one religion, though there are a hundred versions of it.

This catholicity and breadth of vision throw into relief the schisms and disputes, the jealousies and rivalries of the world's big, fat, set, militant religions. Intolerant only of pettiness and lip service, he asks: 'Pray what are the mysteries of religion? Are they faith, hope, love, heroism, life, creation; or are they pews and pulpits, prayer-books and Sunday bonnets, copes and stoles and dalmatics?' And elsewhere he indirectly answers his own question. 'Any place where men dwell,' he writes, 'village or city, is a reflection of the consciousness of every single man. In my consciousness there is a market, a garden, a dwelling, a workshop, a lovers' walk—above all, a cathedral. My appeal to the master-builder is: Mirror this cathedral for me in enduring stone; make it with hands; let it direct its sure and clear appeal to my senses, so that when my spirit is vaguely groping after an elusive mood my eye shall be caught by the skyward tower, showing me where, within the cathedral, I may find my way to the cathedral within me.'

Shaw is religious in a thoroughly secular way. There can be no spiritual ecstasy for him until his intellect has been satisfied or at least appeased. He is philosophically-minded about religion; and, conversely, religiously-minded about

philosophy. To him, philosophy and religion are two sides of the same coin. 'He who seeks in contemplation to discover the inner will of the world, in invention to discover the means of fulfilling that will, and in action to do that will by the so-discovered means,' is his gracefully flowing definition of 'the philosophic man.' It might equally well be his definition of 'the religious man.'

This secular, intellectual, philosophical approach enables Shaw to dispense with the great mass of world theology, whether it concerns itself with heaven or hell or nirvana, with sacrifices or sacraments, with many gods or one, with souls predestined to grace or souls predestined to damnation, with virgin births or papal infallibility, and to throw it in the dustbin as unfit for adult human consumption. He makes mincemeat of any orthodox creed if expected to accept it literally. As for reverence, confront Shaw with an object commanding reverence and he will be as reverent as any man; but, as he subjects every offering to the stiff intellectual test of credibility, he finds such objects scarce. For things and theories, commonly of reverence to others, Shaw shows no veneration. 'What about my bump of veneration?' he once asked a phrenologist. 'Bump!' exclaimed that expert. 'It's a hole.'

At the same time Shaw is more than willing to respect your beliefs if convinced you hold them sincerely; for he recognizes that he, like every one else, must climb to the Final Truth up a long ladder of hypotheses, rung by rung, hypothesis by hypothesis, and that in this world only the first few rungs are within our grasp. 'The man,' he affirms, 'who believes that he has more than a provisional hypothesis to go on is a born fool.' He is no fanatic, therefore, no defacing Cromwellian iconoclast itching to turn his parish church into a cinema or garage. On the contrary, his behaviour as a parishioner is decorous and normal: that is, he does not attend church services, but as the richest parishioner contributes to their expenses *in absentia* by writing a cheque. When it comes to conduct, Shaw is a gentleman; and the decencies of English country life and its lord-of-the-manor obligations weigh more heavily with him than the hair-splittings of dogma and belief. Only

a mercilessly long course of sermons, so fundamentalist as to be worthy of Dayton, Tennessee, could persuade Shaw to stop that cheque.

Shaw can be bribed with promise of a future heaven no more successfully than frightened by threat of a future hell, for in his creed the future, in so far as it concerns the survival of personal identity, does not exist. Is this the same, then, as a disbelief in immortality? Not quite. There is immortality in a leaf—of a kind. Sere and yellow, the leaf falls. It may be dead, but it is not annihilated. It has only returned to the earth from which it sprang. It is there: the law of the conservation of matter sees to that. It enriches the earth. And though unrecognizable in disintegration and decay, chemically speaking it does not die. Its elements, transmuted, go on: only its identity is destroyed, only no longer is it a leaf. And only in this limited sense does Shaw believe in immortality of body and soul. Anything in the nature of a more personal survival he holds incredible. He cannot imagine such a state. 'Can *you* imagine,' he asks, 'an existence in which you cannot get rid of Bernard Shaw?' Can you imagine, in short, what he calls 'an unimaginable nightmare'?

What, then, is Bernard Shaw's attitude to Jesus? Is he a Christian? That depends on what we mean by Christian. Nietzsche, for instance, held that there had been only one Christian, and that He had died on the Cross. But if by Christian we mean someone who is an active member of one or other of the established churches or denominational sects of Christendom, the answer is that Shaw is not such a person. He was born and christened a Protestant episcopalian. But he was never confirmed. Like Voltaire, he is so religious that he is anti-clerical. In particular, he has a horror of the idea that his sins can be atoned for by anybody but himself, a man's sin clinging to him, according to Shaw's way of thinking, until he himself throws it off by overcoming the desire to sin. Thus the doctrine of the Atonement is abhorrent to Shaw, and he thinks that it leads away from the Christianity of Christ to what he calls the Crosstianity of Christendom. He blames St. Paul for developing the doctrine of vicarious atonement, declaring

that 'to this day Pauline Christianity is, and owes its enormous vogue to being, a premium on sin.' Indeed, Shaw blames St. Paul for most things. If Jesus is Christianity's hero, St. Paul is the villain who bound the hero hand and foot with multiple threads of doctrine and theology; for, according to Shaw, there has 'never been a more monstrous imposition perpetrated than the imposition of the limitations of Paul's soul upon the soul of Jesus.'

As regards Jesus Himself, Shaw sees in Him a divinely inspired prophet and teacher, to whom, as an economist, the world had better listen before it is too late. Attributing divinity to all men, he is intellectually incapable of investing Jesus with the extraordinary divinity that makes Him one of the three persons of a triune deity. This error—for so it seems to Shaw—he thinks was set on foot by St. Peter's remark to Jesus about His being the Son of God, the affirmation turning Jesus's head to the point of self-deception. Shaw's approach is therefore not that of redeemer to Redeemer or of worshipper to worshipped, but that of one preacher to another, the one a Dubliner preaching in London, the other a Nazarene preaching in Jerusalem; or that of one economist to another: in short, a man-to-man approach, impiously fraternal. The familiarity of the approach notwithstanding—indeed perhaps because of it—Shaw is staunchly on Jesus's side. Moreover, he declares that any one may be a follower of Jesus, and therefore call himself a Jesuit or even a Christian, 'if he holds, as the strictest Secularist quite legitimately may, that all prophets are inspired, and all men with missions, Christs.' And if asked: 'Are you a member with us in Christ?' I think he would answer: 'Yes: we are all of us vehicles for the Life Force.'

Gilbert Chesterton, who was a Roman Catholic by conversion, used to scoff gently at Shaw's Life-Force by asking how on earth a man could worship a hyphen. But there are many ways of worshipping, and until the Kingdom of God is established, the most acceptable way, Bernard Shaw would say, is to labour with God (or whatever you like to call Him) and help to build it, instead of dawdling in the courts of ritualistic praise and indulging the emotions. God

is busy; and they that worship Him must worship Him by being busy with Him. The Life Force needs labourers badly, for without them it cannot work at all. Moreover, even when it and they do work together, it is no wiser and no quicker than they. It and its creations, the power and the instruments, driver and driven, master and workmen, God and His children, are all equal in a communism of knowledge and ignorance, in a bond of adventure, effort, trial, error, and hope. It is as if an employer were to take his workers into his confidence, ask their advice, and generally throw himself on their mercy. The workers are flattered, and at once respond to their added responsibility by determining not to let 'the governor' down. Thus the Kingdom of God becomes a co-operative enterprise conducted on modern lines, with the workers part-owners. The Kingdom of God is theirs as well as God's, and God cannot build it without their help and work. Such a religious layout appeals strongly to Bernard Shaw, because he is always anxious to help, advise, and assume responsibility. Moreover, he likes the idea of being an active partner in a going concern, instead of being told to believe certain things and to act in certain ways under threat of punishment for failure to do so.

The Life Force has neither the time nor the intelligence to mete out rewards and punishments: if it had, it would doubtless prohibit them as foolish. The reward of the Kingdom of God is the building of it: that is heaven. And there is no punishment except that of not being called upon to build it, no hell except the hell of being passed over and left with nothing to do but enjoy yourself. The doing and the daring, the being and becoming, these are the delights of heaven, just as having nothing to do and being content are the tortures of a hell where the flames do not even burn you.

But the choice is not between heaven and hell, but between survival and obliteration. For do not let us imagine that the Life Force cannot do without us. If we fail it, it will find other partners for the work of pressing forward its dim but mighty purpose. If man clings to his errors and denies the light, that is not the end of the Life

Force, or of hope: it is the end only of man. Man, as we know him, will be scrapped, and something else tried. 'The power that produced Man when the monkey was not up to the mark, can produce a higher creature than Man if Man does not come up to the mark. What it means is that if Man is to be saved, Man must save himself. There seems no compelling reason why he should be saved. He is by no means an ideal creature. At his present best many of his ways are so unpleasant that they are unmentionable in polite society, and so painful that he is compelled to pretend that pain is often a good. Nature holds no brief for the human experiment: it must stand or fall by its results. If Man will not serve, Nature will try another experiment.'

How can Man serve? By keeping his body fit; it may be a poor body, but it is the only one he has, so he may as well keep it bright and clean: by keeping his mind, too, bright and clean: by doing, and daring, and being curious: by being tolerant of novelty, and by suspecting heresy of truth.

It is not easy to keep the mind bright and clean if it is cluttered up with old customs and superstitions. The Life Force does not inhabit lumber rooms. The Bible, for instance, is full of pictures of God which have served their turn, and which show how God reveals Himself to men according to their capacity to understand Him. In *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God*, Shaw takes us through the Bible like a guide taking visitors through a picture gallery, pointing out on the walls the successive revelations of God from the 'Omnipotent Bogey Man, maker of night and day and sun and moon, of the four seasons and their miracle of seed and harvest, to a braver idealization of a benevolent sage, a just judge, and affectionate father.' To-day, when we are pleased to call man adolescent, Shaw would hang another picture of God on the walls and extend the revelation to 'the incorporeal word that never becomes flesh, at which point modern science and philosophy take up the problem with its *Vis Naturae*, its *Élan Vital*, its Life Force, its Evolutionary Appetite, its still more abstract Categorical Imperative, and

what not.' Shaw's point is that there is not room in our minds for all the old pictures of God if we persist in looking on them as pictures of the living God. They are nothing of the kind, he insists, all but one being pictures of dead gods; not false gods, but Has Beens. The picture of the living God is the latest picture which we can appreciate and understand. The rest we must either sweep away; or, if we keep them, we must look on them as nothing more than legends, or pictures in a gallery of ancestral mythology, or interesting records, or historical relics, and put them into a museum of evolutionary exhibits.

Bernard Shaw pretends not to be certain of the meaning of his tale of the Black Girl. Its moral, however, seems clear. It is surely that we should take a lesson from the bees and the clover. When a bee lights on a blossom he finds it divided into many dozens of smaller flowers, or florets; and as he drains a floret of its honey, so he invariably turns it down, thus indicating for the benefit of all other visiting bees that all the downward pointing florets, once useful and honeyed, are now empty, finished, done with, and as good as dead. What the bee does instinctively with the clover's florets Shaw would have us do deliberately with our beliefs. Putting the matter colloquially, he warns us to throw out our dirty water before we take in fresh.

The difficulty of worshipping anything so apparently fumbling and dumb, so blind and stupid as the Life Force, and of retaining our self-respect while paying it allegiance, is mitigated when we remember two axioms: first, that man always makes God in his own image, so that the cap fits, for man too is fumbling and stupid; and second, that in every religion what man worships is not God, but only such revelation of Him as is suited to man's earthly plane. Sensing this kind of difficulty, Shaw refrains from omniscience and offers his creed as 'nothing more than another provisional hypothesis.' All provisional hypotheses may be illusions, he adds, 'but if they conduce to beneficial conduct they must be inculcated and acted on by governments until better ones arrive.' So long as Shaw is reasonably satisfied that he has got hold of the right end of the

stick, he is not dismayed if he cannot see the other end of it. After all, the stick is eternally long.

But he is immensely curious about what is at the other end. Indeed, Shaw is immensely curious about everything, and declares that if he had been Adam he would have swallowed every apple on the tree out of sheer curiosity and thirst for knowledge the moment its owner's back was turned, and not left one for Eve. Curiosity is the note on which Shaw ends *Back to Methuselah*, the long pentateuch of his faith in parable form: curiosity, one of the notes in the octave of Life. The final passage, soaring into the borderland where prose and poetry meet, is remarkable for having left Joey the Clown on the ground. It is therefore worth quoting. The speaker is the mythological Lilith, who was before Adam and Eve, and she is speaking of the acceptance by these mortals of the burden of eternal life.

'Best of all, they are still not satisfied: the impulse I gave them in that day when I sundered myself in twain and launched Man and Woman on the earth still urges them: after passing a million goals they press on to the redemption from the flesh, to the vortex freed from matter, to the whirlpool in pure intelligence that, when the world began, was a whirlpool in pure force. And though all that they have done seems but the first hour of the infinite work of creation, yet I will not supersede them until they have forded this last stream that lies between flesh and spirit, and disentangled their life from the matter that has always mocked it. I can wait: waiting and patience mean nothing to the eternal. I gave the woman the greatest of gifts: curiosity. By that her seed has been saved from my wrath; for I also am curious; and I have waited always to see what they will do to-morrow. Let them feed that appetite well for me. I say, let them dread, of all things, stagnation; for from the moment, I, Lilith, lose hope and faith in them, they are doomed. In that hope and faith I have let them live for a moment; and in that moment I have spared them many times. But mightier creatures than they have killed hope and faith, and perished from the earth; and I may not spare them for ever. I am Lilith; I brought life into the



At the Malvern Festival: G. B. S. shows Barry Jones how his new camera works

whirlpool of force, and compelled my enemy, Matter, to obey a living soul. But in enslaving Life's enemy I made him Life's master; for that is the end of all slavery; and now I shall see the slave set free and the enemy reconciled, the whirlpool become all life and no matter.'

The play draws to its close. Still the voice of Lilith is heard. 'Of Life only there is no end; and though of its million starry mansions many are empty and many still unbuilt, and though its vast domain is as yet unbearably desert, my seed shall one day fill it and master its matter to the uttermost confines. And for what is beyond, the eyesight of Lilith is too short. It is enough that there is a beyond.'

As the curtain slowly falls, one can almost hear the roll of cosmic drums.

The Life Force is too nebulous and impersonal a conception of God to be embraced as a religion by many. But can we lightly reject Shaw's description of religion as the desire to be an instrument of a Purpose which far transcends one's personal self and which, imbuing all past creation and all creation to come, fills the spheres with its breath? Is he not appealing to the religious urge in man when he invites us to offer ourselves humbly and joyously for ravishment by the Life Force? 'This,' cries his Don Juan, 'is the true joy of life; the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrapheap; the being a force of nature, instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.' To pull and push and strive forward, gropingly, but as best we may, away from matter and towards spirit, with conscience and curiosity for guides: this is the ecstasy of Creative Evolution.

Once when tub-thumping in Hyde Park and finding in his audience only two policemen patrolling there to keep order, Shaw, nothing fazed, treated the pair to a quiet and fluent oration on Socialism for an hour. Much in the same way, if we can imagine so weird a spectacle as that of Shaw in his red-bearded days enlisting (surely by compulsion) in

the Army, the conversation would have proceeded something like this:

SERGEANT. [*Filling up a form.*] Religion?

PRIVATE SHAW. C.E.

SERGEANT. C.E.! No such thing. You mean C. of E. Church of England.

PRIVATE SHAW. No, sergeant. C.E.

SERGEANT. Ho! C.E., eh? [*With heavy sarcasm.*] And what might C.E. stand for?

PRIVATE SHAW. Creative Evolution, sergeant.

SERGEANT. [*With even heavier sarcasm.*] Hindeed! And may I ask what *that* is?

PRIVATE SHAW. Certainly, sergeant. I'll tell you. [*He takes a deep breath.*]

And seizing his cue, Shaw would have been off and well launched into the subject, hoping to fit in brief sketches of Jehovah, Shelley, Darwin, Schopenhauer, Lamarck, Bergson, and Butler before the dumbfounded sergeant had recovered sufficiently to pack him off to the regimental doctor as a suspected lunatic, or at least to the regimental barber's to be shaved.

CHAPTER XVI

ECONOMIST

IN the heart of Dorset, where the quiet of the English countryside still abides like an evening hymn, lies Tolpuddle. Just before Queen Victoria came to the throne this little village produced a handful of men who later became famous as the Tolpuddle Martyrs. They were agricultural labourers, and they had tried to make life a little less precarious by forming a trade union, and in consequence had been arrested, unfairly tried, and finally deported. At the centenary of their martyrdom, Bernard Shaw was asked to write a few lines to introduce the volume recording their history. He wrote tersely to the effect that he had no sympathy for martyrs and no use for people who tried to alleviate poverty, because if poverty was made bearable it would be borne. The only thing to do with poverty was to abolish it.

The brutality of such remarks on such an occasion served Shaw's purpose; which was, to divest the centenary of sentimentality, and to make his views on the subject of poverty clear for all occasions. Flat, uncompromising condemnation of poverty is perhaps Shaw's greatest contribution to economic thought. At a meeting he once shocked his colleagues, who were trying to pass a motion that every workman should have three pounds a week, by saying that he was interested only in workmen with thirty pounds a week. He is not interested in Poor Laws: only in abolishing the poor. Far from wanting the poor always with him, he would abolish them by the simple expedient of making them rich. 'Poverty,' he says, 'should be neither pitied as an inevitable misfortune, nor tolerated as a just retribution for misconduct, but resolutely stamped out and prevented from recurring as a disease fatal to society.'

Since poverty is a negative state, perhaps it would be better to say that Shaw's great contribution to economics is his insistence on the importance of money. 'The universal regard for money is the one hopeful fact in our

civilization, the one sound spot in our social conscience. Money is the most important thing in the world. It represents health, strength, honour, generosity, and beauty as conspicuously and undeniably as the want of it represents illness, weakness, disgrace, meanness, and ugliness. Not the least of its virtues is that it destroys base people as certainly as it fortifies and dignifies noble people. It is only when it is cheapened to worthlessness for some, and made impossibly dear to others, that it becomes a curse. In short, it is a curse only in such foolish conditions that life itself is a curse. For the two things are inseparable: money is the counter that enables life to be distributed socially: it is life as truly as sovereigns and banknotes are money.' This is splendid mental food for children growing up to be citizens in an age of potential plenty: and, did I own a school or factory, I would hang framed copies of this nobly realistic creed in letters of gold about the place, even if I had to displace such efficiency slogans as Time is Money and Get Out This Means You. Recognition of the importance of money is the basis of all sound and successful personal and national morality, and every teacher and twaddler who denies this or suppresses it, Shaw insists, is an enemy of life.

No one has made clearer than Shaw the closeness of the bond between life and money. The tragedy of the medical profession, for instance, what is it but that doctors are forced to prescribe medicine for patients whose real need is more money? How can a nation breed healthily, let alone live healthily, when according to Sir John Orr one quarter of it lives in a chronic state of malnutrition? Shaw, it is good to note, is not a member of the Change of Heart School. Change the diet, change the system, he implies, and the heart will take care of itself. If we want healthy children we must have healthy parents, and parents cannot be healthy unless they are also wealthy; and we cannot have healthy and wealthy parents except in healthy and wealthy houses and towns, and for these we must have healthy and wealthy countries. 'The crying need of the nation is not for better morals, cheaper bread, temperance, liberty, culture, redemption of fallen sisters and erring brothers, nor

the grace, love, and fellowship of the Trinity, but simply for enough money. And the evil to be attacked is not sin, suffering, greed, priestcraft, kingcraft, demagoguery, monopoly, ignorance, drink, war, pestilence, nor any other of the scapegoats which reformers sacrifice, but simply poverty.'

In his determination to hold his audience even on the subject of economics Shaw is apt to use words loosely. In economics that is dangerous. By 'money,' for instance, he means 'purchasing power'—two very different things, since an increase in money results in no increase in what you get for that money if prices and expenses have increased by a like amount. It is not money but its power to purchase that needs to be increased.

It is easy to talk, of course, and easier still to write. Yet to-day nothing needs reiteration so much as the simple, obvious truths. Bad news we believe at the first whisper; it is good news that we cannot take in. In the twentieth century above all others, when scarcity is still regarded as a fit and proper diet for a world physically capable of producing such abundance that, potentially, it is a world not flowing but overflowing with milk and honey; when coffee has been thrown into the sea, cattle burnt, wheat used as fuel, milk poured down the drains, cotton ploughed back into the earth, and the bounty of nature in general regarded as a calamity of the first magnitude; and when, moreover, all these things were done, not secretly or in shame or in defiance of the law, but openly and virtuously and systematically in one long desperate attempt to keep plastered together a money system that is cracked: then, anything and everything that condemns this blasphemous destruction, turns a searchlight on to money, and insists on man's inalienable right to the vast wealth under his nose, is of value. For to some people, many of them influential, poverty still has her charms, and the Reverend Townsend, previously quoted, has his counterparts to-day, though if they value their skins they are less outspoken. Indeed, so inured are we to the idea of poverty as the normal state to which it has pleased God to call us, that the first reaction of an intelligent friend, glancing over my shoulder at the

above quotations from Shaw, was to ask, quite sincerely: 'I suppose he's trying to be funny?'

Necessary, therefore, is Shaw's insistence that 'until the fear of bodily want is forgotten as completely as the fear of wolves already is in civilized capitals, we shall never have a decent social life.' He knows that there is no reason why this fear should not be banished. He knows that the physical machinery for the production of all reasonable bodily wants is already in being, thanks to man's inventive genius, and that nothing is needed now but an intelligent piece of economic machinery to enable that productive machinery to work. He knows that the problem of production is solved, and that the only problem left is the problem of consumption, which, except in the case of thieves, is a money problem. If production gives us ugly things, that is not the fault of production but of taste; if it gives us cheap and nasty things, that again is not the fault of production but of lack of money; and if it gives us destructive and deathly things, that too is because the root cause of war is economic. About the full power of production as such, however, there can be no question. By harnessing Earth's energy, man has turned nature into a cornucopia. That is the vision which has become fact. And nothing is more important than constant assertion of that fact, with the insistence, by every means in our power, that our economic system shall be so amended that the cornucopia be enabled to pour out the materials of life instead of death.

Salutary, too, are Shaw's ideas on the subject of work, though tinged perhaps too heavily with the modern Puritanism which reserves for work the sanctity formerly bestowed upon the body. Even so, while stipulating that work is 'a prime necessity of a tolerable existence,' Bernard Shaw realizes that work, in the sense of labouring for hire, becomes an intolerable curse when men are forced to overwork. The dynamic element in man will always make him work in the sense of being active, just as pride will always make him resent working like a slave. Only the overworked think of heaven as a perpetual holiday: if people were habitually underworked they would think of it as a

twenty-four-hour shift. In short, as Shaw says: 'There is no end to the astonishing things that may happen when the curse of Adam first becomes a blessing and then an incurable habit.' The opportunity to make work a blessing for all instead of a curse to most, is vouchsafed to man to-day for the first time in the known history of the world: for, whilst the menial labour of providing the material supplies of life are carried out to-day as they were in previous civilizations, by slaves, to-day the slaves can be, if we wish, not human ones at all, as they were in Egypt, Rome, and Greece, but mechanical ones of electricity and steel which can work efficiently for twenty-four hours a day, rarely go sick or on strike, and have no aspirations to godhead.

We now come to the keystone which holds together the whole arch of Shaw's economic thought. For his opinions about money, poverty, and work are, after all, only gloriously and emphatically stated affirmations of what in an age of potential abundance should have been obvious long ago. His keystone is more than this: it is the affirmation of a principle. Shaw calls attention to it a great number of times, using all sorts of homely metaphors and similes to impress it on our minds. For instance, he asks: 'Are you pulling your weight in the social boat?' Perhaps the most dogmatic and comprehensive of all his descriptions of this keystone is the following: 'The most important simple fundamental economic truth to impress on a child in complicated civilizations like ours is the truth that whoever consumes goods or services without producing by personal effort the equivalent of what he or she consumes, inflicts on the community precisely the same injury as a thief, and would, in any honest state, be treated as a thief, however full his or her pockets might be of money made by other people.'

One may note in passing that Shaw, again writing loosely, means money *earned* or *acquired* by other people, for the only *makers* of money, of course, are the Master of the Royal Mint and the banking system, and if any one else is caught making money he becomes His Majesty's guest for an inconveniently long period. I suppose the misleading phrase about 'making money' is in such common use because so many people come by money without earning it.

But this is by the way, and Shaw's main meaning is clear. He means, briefly, that no one must take out of the common stockpot more than he puts in. Indeed, he means more, adding that people must put in not only the equivalent of what they take out but, also, 'a surplus sufficient to provide for their superannuation and pay back the debt due to their nurture.'

How reasonable, one thinks, how just, how fair! It seems a four-square proposition. And nobody but an anti-social maniac would disagree with its underlying idea that everything in life is conditional. We can put our hands into the common stockpot only on conditions. The stockpot is not free, any more than anything in life is free. There is a price for everything, the price being the fulfilment of conditions. At no time are we entirely free, and when Rousseau said that man was born free, Rousseau was wrong. Even before he is born, man is struggling against, and in the end mutely accepting, conditions for survival in his mother's womb, just as he accepts, far from mutely, further conditions as soon as he is born. When he is grown sufficiently to be able to think for himself, he still must accept conditions; if he refuses, he becomes socially intolerable and is dealt with accordingly. The imposition of conditions by society and their fulfilment by its citizens are the warp and woof which hold society together and enable it to weave its pattern of civilization. Such reflections, however, are not peculiar to Socialists, and Shaw's keystone is no more socialistic than, say, the feudal system, under which men enjoyed the protection of their lord on condition that they fought for him. Life itself being conditional, statements of this kidney are truisms.

So far so good. Ethically, this keystone of Shaw's is plumb. Examined with the technical instruments of economics, however, it is found not to fit quite so snugly into the modern order of things as at first appeared. For (as it would be necessary to explain at some length if this were a book on economics) the common stockpot does not contain, as Shaw implies, only the contributions and productive efforts of human beings. It contains a great deal more. A steadily increasing amount of its contents is contributed

by no human beings at all, however hardworking, but by the wholly inhuman and inanimate agency we call the machine. To put the matter as untechnically as possible, the wealth—*wealth*, mind: not money—produced by so many men in so many days with the help of modern power plant and process, is greater than the wealth which would have been produced if the same number of men had worked the same number of days, without that mechanical help. Obvious as this fact is, its vital implications, judging by the world's economic practices, are far from obvious.

Actually, of course, the majority of modern products are now so complex that no amount of individual labour could produce them. Speaking of industry as a whole, production by the individual is a thing of the past. The ancient Saxon law by which no man could be deprived of the tools of his trade ceases to have much meaning under modern conditions and, like so many cherished notions, must be discarded; for the modern workman's tools are in the factory, welded into its giant mechanisms. No single workman makes, or can make a motor-car, for instance, or a pair of silk stockings, or a gramophone. Instead, a vast number of men associate together to produce such things, pooling their resources, some, for instance, contributing their money, others their skill, or knowledge, or organizing ability. Now the results of this association are manifold, some of them recognized and some not. Among the recognized results are the product itself, employment, circulation of money, and, with luck and good management, financial profit; while among the hitherto unrecognized results, by far the most important is the highly satisfactory by-product which modern economists call *the unearned increment of association*. Increment means increase, and this increase is an increase, quite literally, of wealth. Strictly speaking, the increment is not unearned: for in one sense it is earned by the machine with the expenditure of its energy and the sweat and thunder of its furnaces and dynamos (and luckily for us the machine has no desire to claim what it earns); and in another sense it is earned by men, in virtue of their being creatures sensible enough to co-operate, clever enough to harness solar energy, clever enough to make the machine.

To return to our stockpot, then, the amount of wealth in it is always greater than the amount put in by individuals. The difference between these two amounts is the wealth put into the stockpot by the machine. An illustration will help us to grasp this revolutionary theory. For simplicity's sake let us imagine America the only country and wheat-growing the only industry. Then let us consider Professor Soddy's estimate that with the help of modern machinery the whole of the U.S.A. wheat crop could be produced by four thousand men. If none but those four thousand were morally entitled, through the medium of money, to put their hands into the stockpot the greater part of its contents would remain untouched, until eventually it rotted and had to be thrown away; a process, incidentally, which under the name of sabotage (sometimes politely called restriction or rationalization) is familiar to-day throughout the world. Obviously, then, some device must be found to enable every one to draw out of the stockpot the additional wealth contributed by the machine. The failure to recognize the existence of this wealth, together with the consequent failure to claim and use it, is the major cause of the world's present dislocation and chaos, and the reason why most nations, no matter how prosperous and progressive, are bogged down in debt, either irrecoverable or unrepayable, and can find no proportionate items of credit to rescue them.

In so far as Shaw's economics are nineteenth-century they are useless, therefore, in a world operating a twentieth-century system of production. None of the men who influenced Shaw's economic thought, such as Ricardo, Proudhon, George, Marx, Jevons, or Ruskin, were born late enough to be compelled to wrestle with the startling implications of the Power Age. With such men Shaw agreed or disagreed, as the case might be, but none of them touched the prime problem of to-day, with the result that Shaw has little in common with modern economists like Kitson, Soddy, Douglas, and Keynes. Sometimes, indeed, he and they do not even speak the same language. Thus, to judge from his chapter on Banking, Shaw seems to be still under the impression that the bulk of bank deposits consist of people's savings, and appears to have no inkling

of the fact, as attested by such authorities as the Macmillan Committee, the Encyclopaedia Britannica, and Reginald McKenna, that the bulk of bank deposits are nothing but the obverse of bank loans, and are created every time a bank makes a loan or buys a security. Nor does Shaw seem aware that financial credit, far from being a postponement of a money payment, as he makes it out chiefly to be, is itself money, just as surely as notes and coin are money; and that, being conveniently transferable in all denominations of the currency except halfpennies and farthings by the cheque system, it is the kind of money used to-day for more than eighty per cent of the world's monetary transactions.

Such unwarenesses, though fatally misleading in their sphere, are mentioned here only to show that Shaw, while magnificently right about the big things, is an Old rather than a New Economist where problems of modern money and the Power Age are concerned.

One of the differences between the Old and the New Economists is, that whilst the Old thought the point of friction lay between capital and labour, the New are equally sure that it lies between industry (which is capital plus labour) on the one hand, and the financial system, under which industry is obliged to operate and suffer, on the other. No doubt capital and labour will always fight as long as there is an insufficient purchasing power in money, or whenever either is too greedy and grasping. But their battles do not belong to the main war: they are only skirmishes fought behind the lines or in the canteen, with trade unions, shop stewards, profit-sharing schemes, and so forth, as referees, to see fair play. For capital and labour, the New Economist feels, are on the same side, fighting for their combined lives. The fight, he discovers, is not Capital versus Labour, as advertised, but, as never advertised, Industry versus Finance. Probably because he has always had his eye on the subsidiary fight, or sideshow, Shaw has never written a play or a preface on the subject of the real and deadly one. Even his armament king in *Major Barbara*, and *Breakages Limited* in *The Apple Cart*, are dramatizations of big business, not of finance, for the business of finance

is neither breakages nor armaments, but money. Only in these two plays does Shaw venture near this dangerous country, and although in the preface to one of them he discusses the power of money sufficiently to show that so-called democracies are nothing but disguised plutocracies, he soon drops the subject, as though too hot to handle.

Another difference between the Old and the New Economists might be put in this way—that the Old knew what was wrong, whilst the New have found how to put it right. The Old pointed with magnificent indignation to all the crying scandals, the industrial horrors, the unfairness, and the greed, and having done so in the teeth of an opposition grown fat on a policy of *laissez-faire*, they are entitled to take their bow with honour and the thanks of humanity. It would be unreasonable to expect them, especially one of their number so unmathematically minded as Bernard Shaw, to grapple in the evening of their lives with momentous conceptions such as the Just Price, or with the implications of the discovery that ‘the cost of production is consumption.’

Nevertheless, with only common sense and a feeling for justice to guide him, Shaw arrived for ethical reasons at one of the major conclusions reached by New Economists for technical reasons: namely, recognition of the necessity for what is called the National Dividend. As I write, there lie before me six of Shaw’s references to this subject, and had I combed his works more closely no doubt I could have turned the six into sixty. But in no reference is he able to do more than state the desirability of such a dividend, because he did not know, any more than any other Old Economist, precisely and technically where the money to pay it with was to come from.

On this matter he can only generalize in a woolly way. Thus in the second Fabian Essay (Shaw’s first, by the way) he declares that ‘a life-interest in the Land and Capital of the nation is the birthright of every individual born within its confines.’ Later and elsewhere he talks of ‘an equal share in the National Industry.’ And again (in 1933): ‘Every able-bodied and able-minded and able-souled person has an absolute right to an equal share in the national dividend.’ Until he explains just what he means by a

national dividend and, even more important, from what source it shall be derived, he remains a sentimentalist beating the air or an underground purveyor of some pernicious scheme to pay Paul by robbing Peter. Where is the money to come from? That is the question. And it is a question Shaw has never answered.

But others have. It is interesting to wonder what would have been the outcome had Shaw lived a generation or two later and his interest in economics been set alight by C. H. Douglas instead of by Henry George. Would he have swallowed Social Credit as voraciously as in fact he swallowed Socialism? It is not unlikely: about both doctrines there is a missionary flavour well calculated to win a born meliorist like Shaw. Be that as it may, if Shaw had not been too old to learn by the time the full implications of the Power Age became apparent to Douglas, he could have learnt from the latter where the money could come from. It could, and can, come from where the wealth it would represent now is, ready and waiting: namely, the common stockpot. For the national dividend is nothing else than the nation's *unearned increment of association* divided up; at present lying unrecognized and unsung. Once recognized for what it is, it will be found to be as real as a round of beef, and the only steps remaining to be taken will be, first, to assess the increment, and second, to monetize it. Difficult? Yes: but for a nation hardened to form-filling, not too difficult. Where there's a will there's a way. Then, duly assessed and monetized, it can be distributed as a national dividend, equally and therefore ethically, with justice to all and malice towards none.

Naturally, the national dividend would carry conditions. For instance, if it was apparent that the maximum number of children which the average married couple could bring up decently was three, then, instead of interfering with the sacred intimacy of English family life by passing a law forbidding mothers to bear more than three children, the State would simply say: 'You can have as many children as you like, but the national dividend will be payable only to three.' Or if there was work to be done and a man refused to do it, God forbid that in a free country he should

be compelled: his dividend would be stopped. Similarly, a man who refused to fight for his country could hardly complain if the country he refused to defend refused him its dividend. Every right carries with it a corresponding duty, and if the one is claimed but the other unperformed, civilized life stops.

In short, the dividend would be stopped only when services ceased to be rendered, on the excellent economic ground that if every one ceased to render services, the source from which the dividend was paid would dry up. Unless men 'associated' there could be no 'unearned increment of association.' In other words, while no one would be demoralized by thinking he was getting 'something for nothing,' the right to that something would be recognized as inalienable, except when the citizen alienated himself by intolerable social behaviour. As long as people behaved tolerably well, they would remain in good standing as life shareholders in Great Britain, Limited, and would draw their dividends accordingly. As Shaw says, summing up the matter: 'It seems that we must begin by holding the right to an income as sacred and equal, just as we now hold the right to life as sacred and equal. Indeed the one right is only a restatement of the other.'

Shaw, as we have already suggested, is not an original thinker, but an assimilator and interpreter of the thoughts of others. He originated no economic system of his own but took Ricardo's theory of rent, Jevons's theory of value, Marx's theory of surplus value—all of them now, by the way, made obsolete by the Power Age—and tailored them intellectually until they fitted him. An example of his assimilatory processes is afforded by this very matter of a national dividend. The idea of such a payment goes back at least as far as 1897, when Edward Bellamy's book *Equality* was published—and read by Shaw. But it was in 1905 that Shaw gave, as it were in close-up, the following glimpse of the processes at work. 'There are two measures sprouting in the political soil which may conceivably grow to something valuable,' he wrote. 'One is the institution of the Legal Minimum Wage. The other, Old Age Pensions. But there is a better plan than either of these.

Some time ago I mentioned the subject of Universal Old Age Pensions to my fellow Socialist Mr. Cobden-Sanderson, famous as an artist-craftsman in bookbinding and printing. "Why not Universal Pensions for Life?" said Cobden-Sanderson. In saying this, he solved the industrial problem at a stroke. At present we say callously to each citizen: "If you want money, earn it," as if his having or not having it were a matter that concerned him alone. We do not even secure for him the opportunity of earning it: on the contrary, we allow our industry to be organized in open dependence on the maintenance of "a reserve army of unemployed" for the sake of "elasticity." The sensible course would be Cobden-Sanderson's: that is, to give every man enough to live on, so as to guarantee the community against the possibility of a case of the malignant disease of poverty, and then (necessarily) to see that he earned it.' This is not only Shaw the economist writing, but Shaw the enzyme.

For the rest, it was in the previous year, 1904, that Shaw gave a pointer to his biographer Archibald Henderson (bracketing himself as usual with one of 'the mighty dead') and wrote: 'In all my plays my economic studies have played as important a part as a knowledge of anatomy does in the works of Michael Angelo.' That may well be: but though he gave his plays a backbone of economics he omitted to dramatize the dismal science itself. And what drama it contains! And how entertainingly would Shaw have fished the drama out! A little duologue between, say, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Governor of the Bank of England before it was nationalized, showing which was boss, Tweedledum or Tweedledee, would have made a pretty start for the most important play Shaw never wrote.

Just as we saw that religion and philosophy were largely interchangeable terms in Shaw's mind, so too are economics and politics. The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism might almost as well be called a guide to economics. Economics old or new, and politics capitalistic or socialistic, are but head and tail of the same coin. In

discussing Shaw as economist much of the politician in him comes to light—enough at any rate for this book's purpose. There are good reasons for treating Shaw the politician summarily. His active political career was very long ago, chiefly in the eighties, and can make uncommonly dull reading. Moreover, that career ended up a blind alley, and is therefore not of much significance—though Shaw can make it seem so by his ability to make an entertaining song and dance over anything and everything that ever happened to him, no matter how trivial. Lastly, its story has already been written. Hesketh Pearson wrote it in his biography of Shaw and, with or without the latter's help, wrote it fully, brilliantly, and once for all. In his hands, admittedly, it makes anything but dull reading.

However, the Fabian Society still breathes. Those curious about its beginnings and about Shaw's part in them—a predominant part, of course—may therefore care to read in brief the salient facts of organized intellectual Socialism in its early days in England.

The Fabian Society has always been numerically insignificant, its membership during its first sixty-odd years ranging between about forty and about two thousand.

The Society was formed in 1884 by Frank Podmore through an amoeba-like split in The Fellowship of the New Life, a collection of idealists till then held together by Thomas Davidson, an American.

Shaw first spoke at a Fabian Society meeting in May 1884; joined the Society in September 1884, and its Executive Committee in January 1885; resigning from that Committee in 1911.

According to Sidney Webb, Shaw led the Fabians from the start. He made Webb join; Webb brought in a fellow civil servant, Sydney Olivier, later to achieve Cabinet rank; and Olivier, in turn, brought in Graham Wallas, later to be best man at Shaw's wedding. These four formed a kind of Fabian brains trust, giving the Society its literary reputation and its intellectual bias, and keeping it free, on the whole, of 'direct action.'

The first Fabian Essays appeared in 1889. They were reasoned, revolutionary political and economic tracts. Shaw

edited them. He and Webb constituted a form of machine: into one end went the raw material of Webb's dry facts and statistics; out at the other came the finished article, Shaw's glistening Essays, at once provocative and persuasive.

The Fabian Essays, acknowledged as factually accurate and journalistically brilliant, gave to Socialism a cachet of respectability. They helped to outdate the kind of remark made by Shaw's mother in Regent Street one day when someone took off his hat to her. 'Who 's that?' she asked her son. 'Cunninghame Graham the Socialist,' Shaw replied. 'Nonsense,' said his mother. 'That man is a gentleman.'

Fabianism as defined by the Fabians—and the hand of Shaw is apparent in the definition's pictorial clarity—is 'at once the policy of, and the belief in, "the inevitability of gradualness."' Things must be so timed, that you bring your horse to the water just as he is feeling in need of a drink; not before, when he will refuse to drink and even, under pressure, kick you and bolt; and not after, when he may be dead of thirst.'

Fabians took their name from the Roman Consul Fabius, nicknamed Cunctator or Delayer, whom they introduced to the public on the cover of the first Fabian Essay (Why are the Many Poor?)—thus:

FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT YOU MUST WAIT, AS FABIUS DID
MOST PATIENTLY, WHEN WARRING AGAINST HANNIBAL,
THOUGH MANY CENSURED HIS DELAYS; BUT WHEN THE
TIME COMES YOU MUST STRIKE HARD, AS FABIUS DID, OR
YOUR WAITING WILL BE IN VAIN, AND FRUITLESS.

The joke about this imposingly allusive but entirely ill-judged injunction, is that thanks to Hannibal's sudden withdrawal from the outskirts of Rome Fabius never had to and therefore never did strike. Needless to say, the joke was neither intended nor, presumably, perceived. Every one was in earnest in those days, for the English Revolution, red and bloody, was quite commonly supposed to be just round the corner and due any day. What fun all that earnestness must have been.

The Fabians were well named; for, like Fabius, they never struck. They never led that horse to the water just

when he was feeling in need of a drink or at other time. They were side-tracked into the blind alley already mentioned, by the less intellectual and more political and agitating Labour elements in the world around them. The Labour Party, then non-existent, evolved, not as might have been expected from the Fabian Society, the self-professed fount of Socialist wisdom, but from the Labour Representation Committee appointed by the London Labour Congress of 1900; and when by 1906 Socialists were actually sitting in Parliament it was from the infant Labour Party, and not from the Fabian Society, lately come of age, that they took their programme and orders. The Party took executive charge of Socialism in England, and the Society was left to bellow advice from its blind alley with the unheeded persistence of a literary uncle.

Not for this had Shaw tub-thumped for fifteen years. Not for this had he slaved doggedly on committees, wire-pulling and conciliating, an indefatigable stage-hand behind the political scenes. Nor for this had he guided a trickle of revolutionary thought, banked, dammed, fed it to a stream, and finally accumulated its waters in the strong capacious reservoirs of Essays and Tracts. If the new fellows did not intend to use his reservoirs, he would not be responsible if they poisoned themselves by drinking from their own muddy streams. Shaw, briefly, had outlived his political usefulness now that Socialism was being fitted for a practical parliamentary programme. As long as Socialism had been up in the air, all gas and gaiters, Shaw's gift for realism had been invaluable in bringing it to earth: but now that it had come to earth in the shape of a Party with solid M.P.s, his views all at once seemed too intellectual, too unpractical, too revolutionary, in fact too Socialistic to find favour. Accordingly, he picked up his hat preparatory to making his exit—for Shaw, a strangely unobtrusive one—from the scene of practical politics. As unobtrusively, he then quietly formed a new political party. It boasted one member: Bernard Shaw.

CHAPTER XVII

PROGRAMME

ACCORDING to Bernard Shaw, there are three things that must be put right if civilization is not to perish, like Rome of old, from atrophy of soul.

The first is the economic system just discussed. Here it is enough to repeat that one part of the problem, namely, how to provide enough physical subsistence for every one, is, thanks to the power-machine, being triumphantly solved, so that there remains for solution only the other part, how to prevent the cunning ones of this earth from nullifying that triumph by using it to satisfy their own greed and lust for power.

The second need, also previously discussed, is a credible religion. The absence of any such religion in the world to-day, or of any creed intellectually honest enough not to require a permanent underpinning of superstition, strikes Bernard Shaw as 'perhaps the most stupendous fact in the whole world-situation.' The desire for complete credibility in religion shows a healthy impatience for omniscience, and on that account is doubtless most acceptable to the Life Force. By way of criticism, however, it might perhaps be submitted, since there are probably many dimensions as well as many mansions in our Father's house, that until man himself acquires a few more dimensions, aeon by aeon and plane by plane, the only utterly credible creed at present is agnosticism's 'I Don't Know.'

Bernard Shaw, however, would square the circle of the infinite with his earthly intellect, gather eternity into the flash of his fourscore years and ten, and surprise the inmost secrets of God with the diminutive searchlight of his reason. His creed he would have as rational as an Act of Parliament, and the articles of his religion as clear as the multiplication table. 'A nation,' says he, 'which revises its parish councils once every three years, but will not revise its articles of religion once in three hundred, even when those articles avowedly began as a political compromise dictated by Mr.

Facing-Both-Ways, is a nation that needs remaking.' No doubt a nation with no religion is better off than a nation saddled with one in which it can no longer believe. But is the remedy quite so simple as Shaw makes out? From the way he writes he might think re-articling a religion as easy as altering the rules of cricket (and enforcing them), and remaking a nation only less easy than remaking a bed.

The third thing, in Shaw's own words, is that 'the deliberate infliction of malicious injuries which now goes on under the name of punishment be abandoned.' He cannot of course agree that such a description of our legal system is in any way exaggerated, that no punishment consists of malicious injuries, and that therefore there is nothing to be abandoned. Instead he insists, with considerable verbal violence, that punishment and sadism are linked together as closely as Siamese twins, and that if we could only realize how far our criminal law was at once a cloak and an instrument for our lust for cruelty, we would instantly reform it, horrified at the brutality of our own sadistic instincts. As it is, 'we have simply added the misery of punishment to the misery of crime, and the cruelty of the judge to the cruelty of the criminal. We have taken the bad man, and made him worse by torture and degradation, incidentally making ourselves worse in the process.' And, to use one of Shaw's most frequent phrases in discussing this subject, two blacks cannot make a white. Quite simply, all punishment is cruel, because fundamentally it cannot be separated from the desire, conscious or otherwise, to obtain pleasure from the infliction of pain. Shaw's horror of punishment is thus similar to his horror of vivisection; the occasion for horror not being the pain inflicted but the pleasure experienced by prison warder or vivisectioner, and the moral support given him by public opinion. It is to put us on our guard against such dark pleasures that Shaw advises parents who strike their children to be sure to do so in anger; for anger, though a fault, is admitted as such, and does not seek to disguise itself as law, or justice, or righteousness, or expiation.

'What!' cries someone at this point. 'Are all our criminals to be let loose and allowed to do as they like?

Is that the idea? If so, I don't like it. We should all be murdered in our beds. For what is to restrain criminals except punishment?'

Shaw's answer is that wrongdoers shall by no means be free to do as they like. The way to deal with such people effectively, and yet without punishing them, was suggested to Bernard Shaw in a practical way when he was a boy in Ireland. He was out one day with an uncle who had with him an old gun-dog, trained, intelligent, and a good worker, who on this occasion suddenly failed, and failed repeatedly. The uncle, realizing that the dog's usefulness was finished, shot it through the head. The incident made a great impression on the youthful Shaw: it was his first lesson in what dictators call liquidation. Though in this particular instance usefulness had ceased by reason of old age, the same principle applies to cases where usefulness ceases by reason of crime. Indeed the principle is already applied to animals. We do not punish dogs who will not stop biting people: we destroy them. If we punish them, by stupidly chaining them up or beating them, they only become more ferocious when we release them. In its results, the shooting of Shaw's uncle's dog was equivalent to the gallows on the human plane: the dog was put out of the way just as the criminal undergoing capital punishment is put out of the way. To make the two liquidations equivalent in method, however, we should have to turn our barbarous gallows and guillotines into lethal chambers at least as comfortable as hospital wards; and to make them equivalent in motive, we should have to cast from our hearts all ideas of revenge and retribution, and simply and dispassionately decide on the most painless, expeditious, and economical way of ridding society of individuals judged intolerable.

But who is to judge? Who is to say where the line is to be drawn between the tolerable and the intolerable? That is the real problem. It is the only problem. And not even Shaw can solve it, because different communities will want to draw the line at different points. Some will want to abolish the death sentence altogether, others will want to apply it differently, and others to extend it. In a community which undertook the breeding of virtue as a

serious social experiment, for instance, liability to be liquidated might be extended in the most alarming directions. The lethal chamber would claim not only homicidal lunatics and imbeciles: it would be filled, if Shaw had any say in the matter, with all people who thought it gentlemanly to live on other people's earnings, moral or immoral; all Members of Parliament voting for the cat-o'-nine-tails; all inhabitants of Harley Street refusing to be nationalized; and all child-beaters who persisted in claiming that whippings hurt them more than their children; and many others.

About that favourite item in most reformers' programmes, abolition of the death penalty, Shaw took a long time to make up his mind, contenting himself with saying that so long as the penalty remained it must be administered as a painless necessity, not as a retributive judgment. 'I cannot foresee which side I should take,' he said. 'A wise man does not ford a stream till he gets to it.' Well, England got to the stream in 1947 with the introduction of the Criminal Justice Bill. By then, at any rate, Shaw had made up his mind, and during the Commons' debate on the Bill wrote declaring himself strongly in favour not only of retaining the death penalty but of extending it.

Apart from the question of capital punishment, what of the great majority of law-breakers who are clearly among the tolerables? Few criminals are hardened. What of first offenders and the like? Obviously they must be cured of their bad habits, and if necessary be sent to prison, as now. But, here again, prisons must not be regarded as places of punishment, but as places of treatment, where, with every enlightening force at our disposal, bad habits would be broken and made good. Most prisoners, Shaw thinks, would find this treatment effective and leave prison cured. The minority, who now return to prison again and again, thereby gradually proving themselves incurable, would eventually find themselves judged intolerable. For them the door would be opened to the lethal chamber.

The idea of transforming our prisons into reformatories and curative homes, rather than into hells of punishment and torture, received practical support by the passage of the Criminal Justice Acts of 1939 and 1948. And one of the

encouraging signs in prison life to-day is the increasing part played in it by the prison doctor; for, thanks to the advances made in psychology and psycho-analysis, he is encouraged to treat prisoners not only for their health but also for their crimes. Imperceptibly nearer approaches the state of affairs pictured by Samuel Butler in *Erewhon*. There, it will be remembered, if you committed a crime you went to hospital, and were fined or sent to prison only if you were ill. Of the same school of thought was the judge in one of G. K. Chesterton's short stories who sentenced a prisoner to two weeks at the seaside.

Bernard Shaw would replace the threat of punishment by the threat of liquidation, and there clings to his criminal code a strong smell of chloroform. The disappearance of punishment, therefore, would not result in an increase of leniency. Rather the reverse, for every criminal would be 'made to understand that a State which is too humane to punish will also be too thrifty to waste the lives of honest men in watching or restraining dishonest men.' In short, if people give more trouble than they are worth, to the lethal chamber with them! Cold-blooded but not cruel, the State must hold the keys of life and death in its hand and not be afraid to use them.

It is a great responsibility. One wonders whether it can be assumed as easily and lightly as Shaw implies. One wonders whether a State proposing to liquidate its incurable criminals can ever rid itself of responsibility for the conditions that produced them. Can society with a good conscience wash its hands of the people it has bred? If they are bad people, it is largely society's fault. Change society's conditions, and ninety per cent of its criminals would become law-abiding citizens. The quality of a tree's fruit is determined by its soil, and to better its yield, treatment must be applied to its roots. When Shaw asks, therefore, how much trouble a troublesome person is worth, surely the answer is, infinite trouble. For until society is willing to undergo root treatment, it is bound by honour, duty, and conscience to make the best it can of its crop of criminals, and to accept responsibility for them. If it were a simple question of kill or cure, there would be no problem; one

would cure the criminal every time. But it is a question of killing or trying to cure. That being so, we should surely, contrary to Shaw's idea, base our legal systems and penal codes, with as few exceptions as possible, on the old saying that while there is life there is hope. And when Shaw objects to the waste involved in setting honest men to watch or restrain dishonest ones, the answer is that there is no waste in turning a dishonest man into an honest man, or in trying to: but a liquidated man is a dead loss. So long as a cure is possible we must keep on trying to effect it, even though we may rarely succeed.

When Shaw visited Russia in 1931, he was interested to find the method practised on his uncle's dog applied to human beings, Russian intolerables being quietly liquidated rather than tried, found guilty, and punished. Liquidation, of course, has been practised many times in history. Herod, for instance, liquidated all, or nearly all, the male babies under two years of age in or near Bethlehem; the Holy Office liquidated heretics of the Church; just as in the twentieth century the Russian N.K.V.D. and the German Gestapo liquidated political heretics. But it is, I repeat, a terrible responsibility, this taking of life in cold blood.

Shaw advocates liquidation because he hates punishment; he hates punishment because he thinks that, besides being ineffectual, it is cruel; and his hatred of cruelty, as we noted earlier, is intense. Until we recognize that this hatred is his deepest feeling, forming the matrix of his soul, we shall never meet the real Bernard Shaw, nor understand his views on crime or on anything else.

At present we kill judicially only to punish, so that our ideas of killing are always bound up with our ideas of punishment. Thus we do not like the idea of killing an incurable homicidal maniac because we do not like the idea of punishing a lunatic. When we no longer like the idea of punishing any one, says Bernard Shaw, the question of killing will settle itself, and 'the problem of disposing of impossible people will put itself on its proper footing. We shall drop our moral airs; but unless we rule killing out absolutely, persons who give more trouble than they are worth, will run the risk of being apologetically,

sympathetically, painlessly, but effectually returned to the dust from which they sprung.'

Shaw's view of the law as a passionless affair, administered impartially and impersonally, will be heartily endorsed by people to whom few things are more nauseating than the spectacle of a judge lecturing a prisoner on the evil of his ways. The only homily permissible to a judge as he looks a prisoner in the eye is the silent one addressed to himself: 'There, but for the Grace of God, go I.' Therefore anything which helps to dehumanize the law, and to relieve human beings of the unbearable responsibility of judging one another, is of value; just as anything which tends to ritualize the law, even the wigs of the barristers, the bigger wig of the judge and his gown of scarlet and ermine, should be encouraged. For we must not presume to administer justice, but be content to administer the law, fully conscious that the line we draw between the tolerable and the intolerable is an uncertain, makeshift line, often crooked. But wherever we choose to draw it, the only rule for good behaviour is to stick to its tolerated side, and our judges who liquidate or send to 'hospital' those who cross it, must do so automatically, without malice or mercy. There should be no more air of punishment or moral superiority in a criminal court when a judge passes a sentence of death or six months' hard labour, than there is at present in a divorce court when his colleague pronounces a decree nisi.

In a previous chapter we had occasion to note that Bernard Shaw does not believe in vicarious expiation of sin. Here it can be added that neither does he believe in its expiation by punishment; nor by purchase, nor by the performance of some correspondingly benevolent act; nor by anything except its cessation. The only way to wipe out a sin or a crime is to stop doing it and to stop wanting to do it. A thief is a thief and knows he is a thief as long as he retains his desire to steal. No forgiveness, no indulgence, no subscription to charity, however large, and no spell of punishment, however severe, can alter the fact or atone for the crime. The thief alone can atone for it, and only by ceasing to be a thief. For, according to Shaw, 'his conscience will not be easy until he has conquered his

will to steal and changed into an honest man by developing that divine spark within him which Jesus insisted on as the everyday reality of what the atheist denies.' To such an attitude one might object, of course, as Dostoevsky made his Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov* object, on the ground that such a concept for conduct was all very well for the few who were strong enough in spirit to bear its burden, but what of the many and the weak?

These three reforms then: fair and equal distribution of the earth's potential plenty, to abolish poverty; the formulation and inculcation of a credible religious creed, to give men a common body of spiritual assumptions on which they can act with lively faith; and, to abolish cruelty, the transformation of punishment for criminals into treatment for the curable and extermination for the incurable: these are the main changes that Shaw advocated as he surveyed the society of his time, with its poverty and greed, spiritual hopelessness, and cruelty.

He is after many other changes too, of course, for he would reform everything, but all of them are subsidiary to the trinity mentioned above, and the majority, he thinks, would fall into their proper places once the big changes had been made. The way Shaw would have us change our views about marriage, for instance, is indicated by such remarks as the following:

'Healthy marriages are partnerships of companionable and affectionate friendship, and cases of lifelong love, whether sentimental or sensual, ought to be sent to the doctor if not to the executioner.'

'No political constitution will ever succeed or deserve to succeed unless it includes the recognition of an absolute right to sexual experience, and is untainted by the Pauline or romantic view of such experience as sinful in itself.'

'The practical solution is to make the individual economically independent of marriage and the family, and to make marriage as easily dissoluble as any other partnership.'

'To put it briefly, a contract for better or worse is a contract that should not be tolerated.'

Then there is nationalization. Industry must be nationalized; the professions must be nationalized; in the Utopia

of Shaw the Republican everything possible must be nationalized, or municipalized, or socialized, or communized. A critic, by way of questioning the wisdom of the bureaucratic system in general, might inquire of Bernard Shaw whether he had ever visited a doctor as a public patient. Shaw would answer that he had not, but that he knew what lay behind the question. And he would proceed to assert that the comparatively rushed and superficial treatment accorded to public patients simply proved the scarcity of public doctors, and of the need, therefore, to publicize and nationalize the medical profession until every G.P. was a public officer of health instead of, as until 1948, a private trader in ill-health. Continuing, he would go on to point out that no man, however kindly and honourable, can give of his best to a public patient when his mind is inevitably, though perhaps unconsciously, distracted by the thoughts of the easy money he can get in his private capacity by visiting rich hypochondriacs at so many guineas a time. If the critic pursued the subject by suggesting that if the private doctor went his solicitous interest and friendliness and personal touch would go with him, Shaw would reply that what he wanted from a doctor was not a personal touch but a professional touch; that friendliness was not infrequently the mask for bungling incompetence; and that a doctor whose interest in his patients was pecuniary was a doctor who was interested in keeping them ill.

It will be time enough to pay attention to what Shaw says on this score after he has received medical attention from a State doctor. Till then, his critic insists that nationalization, whether of the medical profession or anything else, is a breeding ground of that blight, the bureaucrat; and that if bureaucracy were examined in those countries where it had been tested longest and was most triumphant (rampant is the better word), it would be found riddled with the twin cankers of inefficiency and graft. The bureaucrat is inefficient because he is safe from competition; and he is prone to deal in graft because, not owning his job, he is not interested in it. He is interested in himself, and his first care is not how much service he can put into his job but how much money he can get out of it,

honestly or otherwise. He is only a cog, and he knows it. Whereas in the case of the private owner, medical or otherwise, interest in himself and interest in his job are identical, and to serve himself well he must do his job well. The backbone of all 'planning,' bureaucracy works splendidly—on paper; but only on paper, because the paper plans never include the human factors of venality, corruptibility, and self-interest.

Shaw, picturing a bureaucracy of incorruptible public-minded Shaws, is all for the *res publica*, the Public Thing, and advocates social control beyond the wildest Fascistic dreams. 'If civilization is to be saved for the first time in history it will have to be by a much greater extension of regulation and organization than any community has been willing to submit to.' We are nearly perishing of anarchism, he says, especially the Americans and the English. Whilst it is undoubtedly true that every additional complexity of life brings with it an additional rule for its control, Shaw seems to have a liking for the rules themselves, other people finding them regrettable. Take the case of the road. The motor-car has produced such rules as pedestrian crossings and traffic lights and speed limits, none of which are beautiful or desirable in themselves, but admittedly inevitable if we are to avoid chaos in road travel. And Shaw, to do him justice, goes far beyond the question of the desirability or inevitability of such things. Never mind, he says, whether social control is desirable; if, as is agreed, it is inevitable, then make a virtue of necessity, and see to it that it is directed to worthy objects and produces worthwhile results. In short, plan. Plan to produce a better man, a superman, lest man perish from the earth. Then peace, no less than war, will have a purpose.

To return to Shaw's three-point practical programme, in what frame of mind would he have us carry it out, and by what light? Shaw would say, I think, in a religious frame of mind and by the light of God's purpose. With the prophet of old he seems to cry, Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Keep it clear. Do not be a stumbling-block to life by depositing yourself sluggishly or obstinately, set or content, in the middle of that way. Never write *Finis* to



Maurice Colbourne as Herr Battler in Shaw's Geneva

anything you have accomplished unless you are prepared to scrap it and put something better in its place. Cast out prejudices. Hold suspect all established opinions, and question the wisdom of your elders. Know, as Lao-Tze knew, that flexibility, whether in principles or habits, is a sign of life, and rigidity a sign of death. Neither collect superstitions nor cherish traditions, lest, like weed on a ship, they hamper your progress. Never say die and never say done. Above all, be curious. For to be curious is to be alive, and to be alive is to be acceptable to God and eligible, with Him, to fight and conquer sin and suffering, ignorance and blindness, stupidity and death.

The Bible describes certain people as being possessed of devils. Bernard Shaw, like Florence Nightingale, is possessed of an angel. His angel takes hold of him, sets his feet on the mountain slope, and together they cry *Excelsior!* Imbued with a restless impulse to progress, Shaw once again finds that the only things worth while are the pilgrim's journey, the becoming, the learning, and the striving. 'Science,' he says, 'becomes dangerous only when it imagines that it has reached its goal. What is wrong with priests and popes is that instead of being apostles and saints, they are nothing but empirics who say "I know" instead of "I am learning," and pray for credulity and inertia as wise men pray for scepticism and activity.'

All progress consists in proving untrue the seemingly true, but so far only science appears to recognize this. The music to which science marches is the detonating noise of exploding hypotheses. Thus, before the electron could be discovered, the atom had to be set up as the ultimate unit of matter. But at the back of its mind science knew that it had set the atom up only to knock it down; unsplittable, the next step was to split it. Indeed, in as far as science refuses to accept its conclusions as conclusive, in so far does it achieve the feat of perpetual motion, and subscribe to life's law of perpetual change. As with science, so it should be with religion, and with morals, if these are to be forces as distinct from mere habits. We must learn to apply the scientific attitude to life itself. For if science

suffered from stagnation in the way that morals and religion now suffer, the scientists who tried to split the atom would have been imprisoned; those who succeeded, crucified.

The case for Shaw the Immoralist, then, is that all progress depends on change, and that all evolution in thought or conduct first appears as heresy and misconduct. 'And as the law of God in any sense of the word which can now command a faith proof against science is a law of evolution, it follows that the law of God is a law of change, and that when the Churches set themselves against change as such, they are setting themselves against the law of God.' This was the underlying thought that made Saint Joan such a vital and inspired play. For in casting out Joan and handing her over to its secular arm to be burnt, the Church was unwittingly denying the latest revelation of Divine Purpose, destroying a tentacle of Creative Evolution, spoiling an experiment of the Life Force, and refusing to receive into its uncatholic bosom an embodiment of the Word.

In the preface to *On the Rocks* Shaw puts these same thoughts into a dramatic duologue between Jesus and Pilate, part of which runs as follows:

JESUS. Without sedition and blasphemy the world would stand still and the kingdom of God never be a stage nearer. The Roman Empire began with a wolf suckling two human infants. If these infants had not been wiser than their fostermother your empire would be a pack of wolves. It is by children who are wiser than their fathers, subjects who are wiser than their emperors, beggars and vagrants who are wiser than their priests, that men rise from being beasts of prey to believing in me and being saved.

PILATE. What do you mean by believing in you?

JESUS. Seeing the world as I do. What else could it mean?

PILATE. And you are the Christ, the Messiah, eh?

JESUS. Were I Satan, my argument would still hold.

PILATE. And I am to spare and encourage every heretic, every rebel, every lawbreaker, every rascalion lest he should turn out to be wiser than all the generations who made the Roman law and built up the Roman Empire on it?

JESUS. By their fruits ye shall know them. Beware how you kill a thought that is new to you. For that thought may be the foundation of the kingdom of God on earth.

PILATE. It may also be the ruin of all kingdoms, all law, and all

human society. It may be the thought of the beast of prey striving to return.

JESUS. The beast of prey is not striving to return: the kingdom of God is striving to come. The empire that looks back in terror shall give way to the kingdom that looks forward with hope.

Has Bernard Shaw turned a somersault, then? Does he no longer believe in liquidation? Are we to tolerate every one lest we do away with the wrong people; that is, the right people? For, as Jesus and Socrates and Joan found to their cost, no one is so intolerable to society as saints, sages, seers, and prophets. Shaw answers: 'We must persecute, even to death; and all we can do to mitigate the danger of persecution, is, first, to bear in mind that unless there is a large liberty to shock conventional people, and a well-informed sense of the value of originality, individuality, and eccentricity, the result will be apparent stagnation covering a repression of evolutionary forces which will eventually explode with extravagant and probably destructive violence.'

Progress to godhead by the method of trial and error, the giving to every living thing, especially to the new thing that seems dangerously immoral, a chance to prove its worth: this is Bernard Shaw's spiritual programme and pilgrimage.

Yet he is no enthusiastic theorist carried away by the exuberance of his own ideas. As long ago as 1904, when in middle age, he realized that man as he exists to-day is incapable of net progress. And with the passage of time he realized this more than ever, declaring, when he wrote Geneva in 1938 in old age, that man as a political animal was a failure, and that until man made up his mind to change for the better, he, Bernard Shaw, could do nothing about it except employ his talents as a playwright professionally, and extract from the situation what tragedy and comedy he could. But man, he reminds us, *can* change, if only he wills it and wants to ardently enough. Where there's a will there's a way.

Is Shaw's message incompressible? I do not think so. The kernel of his programme and the key to it—his message, in short—is compressible into two words, which, if I had

interested in it no more than he is frightened of death. 'I am looking,' he says, 'for a race of men who are not afraid of death.' For himself, he believes that the spark which is in him will return at death to the main stream of life, and so help to 'renew the battalions of the future.'

It is fitting to draw to a close on this note of a Bernard Shaw who is seriously optimistic, who declines to abandon hope for man, and whose spear refuses to be broken. For such a Bernard Shaw is the real Bernard Shaw. When a twilight of apathy has settled on the minds of men, when brute force again threatens all the world, when disillusion makes us ask bitterly how many more times the war to end war has to be fought, and when men fail to hang their heads in shame at the diabolical mess they are handing on to their children and dare call civilization, it is small wonder that those children ask sceptically whether life is worth living except on the most self-indulgent terms. 'What of life?' this generation cries out in cynical disdain. There is neither disdain nor cynicism in the unfaltering voice of this ancient whitebeard, Bernard Shaw, as he answers: 'Everything!'

Beside this dogged insistence on hope, this obstinate optimism, this holding up of the heavens even while they seem to fall, all else about Bernard Shaw dwindles into unimportance. His hundred and one interests might be mentioned, but all belong more properly to the ephemeral and incidental part of a man's life, and with that we are not especially concerned. Thus mention might be made of Bernard Shaw's love of swimming; or his interest in boxing; or his leaning towards the mystical philosophy of strength culture professed by the ex-champion wrestler George Hackenschmidt; or how, being in a sufficiency of funds, he declined the money, a sum of £8,000 odd, when awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature (Nobel, by the way, was the inventor of dynamite); or how at one time certain tradesmen used to make more money by selling the neat spidery signature on Shaw's weekly cheques than by cashing them in the ordinary way, and how Shaw could stop the practice only by paying for his vegetables and groceries in cash; or how the Royalist Society of the U.S.A. once voted him

King of America and Will Rogers Vice-King. But our knowledge of the essential man is not thereby much increased. Indeed some of the Shavian trimmings tend definitely to obscure the real Bernard Shaw. Joey the Clown, for example, frequently usurps his master's voice, though I suppose it is hardly correct to call Joey a trimming, since Shaw inherited him from his father and took delight in bringing him to fullness.

These considerations notwithstanding, there are one or two matters worth mentioning, in the hope that they may help to bring to life a portrait so accurate that it may be dull, and touch it up with detail without blurring its main features.

One is the matter of Shaw's manners. Without question, but contrary to general opinion, these are good. I have no doubt, for instance, that nothing but innate good manners prevented the youthful Shaw from disentangling himself from the prostitute, aforementioned, until they were half way up Bond Street. This does not mean, however, that Shaw is never rude. It means that when he is rude he is deliberately so, with the result that his rudeness means and is intended to mean something. Only a well-mannered person can be rude with effect, and being rude is one of Shaw's ways of teaching. Thus he refused to attend Sir Henry Irving's funeral at Westminster 'on the grounds that Literature has no place at Irving's graveside.' In the same way he declined to contribute or take part in Dame Marie Tempest's Jubilee, doubtless on the ground that she had been singing away merrily in light opera when she ought to have been busy fitting herself to play heroines first in Ibsen and then in Shaw.

Even when he is rude, or perhaps particularly then, Shaw takes care to be witty. But sometimes his shafts are less sharpened than usual, or aimed at people who are not amused and who yet have wit enough themselves to pay him back in his own coin. Thus when Winston Churchill's mother, Lady Randolph Churchill, exercising her functions as a great Edwardian hostess, asked the remarkable dramatic critic with the red beard to her house-party for the week-end, the remarkable dramatic critic replied to the invitation:

to choose them, would be, with an equal stress on each, 'Breed Virtue.' These two words, moreover, constitute, I think, sufficient answer to the charge that Shaw talks round everything and solves nothing; for the fault, dear critic, lies not in our Shaw, but in ourselves, that humanity has still to determine whether it wishes to see virtue triumphant, and therefore bred.

The older Shaw grew, the more sceptical he became about humanity's interest in virtue. Humanity in its present state he gives up as hopeless: to be saved, it must change. The will must therefore be directed not so much towards the breeding or acquisition of virtue as simply towards a longevity in the hope that a real desire for virtue will be one of its natural fruits. Even if there is no virtue in us to begin with, we shall become virtuous simply because we shall become plain bored with being mischievous for more than a hundred years or so. Man, as Shaw sees him in the future, will say with St. Paul—or very nearly: 'When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when, at the age of five-score years, I became a man, I put away childish things—and began to desire virtue.'

The attainment of longevity: this is Shaw's one-plank, practical, long-term programme and, according to him, man's only hope. Back to Methuselah!

CHAPTER XVIII

G. B. S.

For himself, work is the only thing. Let the ice-cap form, and the universe expand till it burst or stretch till it snap, Bernard Shaw will fight on, and write on, while his eye can see, his tongue speak, and his fingers hold a pen. 'I tell you that as long as I can conceive something better than myself I cannot be easy unless I am striving to bring it into existence. That is the law of my life.' The speaker is Don Juan in his Shavian Hell, but the voice is the voice of the real Bernard Shaw.

With Shaw, work is a habit rather than a virtue, and what he cannot stop he has learned to like. Is he happy? Only when he is working, only when he is pursuing his purpose, only when he is careful to avoid the pursuit of happiness; for by pursuit, as Maeterlinck reminded us in *The Blue Bird*, happiness is never found. 'The pursuit of happiness is perhaps the most miserable of human occupations,' says Shaw. 'Happiness is a by-product,' remarks his John Tanner. 'I no longer desire happiness: life is nobler than that,' exclaims his Marchbanks. 'Happiness is the most tedious thing in the world to me. Should I be what I am if I cared about happiness?' asks his Napoleon. And his Devil, a perfect gentleman, has nothing but happiness to offer his guests in hell. No, says Bernard Shaw: Work! and all the other things will be added unto you. 'I must take myself as I am and get what work I can out of myself.' And he practises what he preaches. It seems to have agreed with him.

As with happiness, so with fame. Referring to *Widowers' Houses*, he remarked: 'I heartily hope the time will come when this play will be both utterly impossible and utterly unintelligible.' The evils of landlordism existed, and that was enough to induce an eager young Shaw, as a good dramatist and a good journalist, to expose them. In seeking a dragon to slay he found fame, which, like happiness, came to him as a by-product. So, too, with immortality: he is

interested in it no more than he is frightened of death. 'I am looking,' he says, 'for a race of men who are not afraid of death.' For himself, he believes that the spark which is in him will return at death to the main stream of life, and so help to 'renew the battalions of the future.'

It is fitting to draw to a close on this note of a Bernard Shaw who is seriously optimistic, who declines to abandon hope for man, and whose spear refuses to be broken. For such a Bernard Shaw is the real Bernard Shaw. When a twilight of apathy has settled on the minds of men, when brute force again threatens all the world, when disillusion makes us ask bitterly how many more times the war to end war has to be fought, and when men fail to hang their heads in shame at the diabolical mess they are handing on to their children and dare call civilization, it is small wonder that those children ask sceptically whether life is worth living except on the most self-indulgent terms. 'What of life?' this generation cries out in cynical disdain. There is neither disdain nor cynicism in the unfaltering voice of this ancient whitebeard, Bernard Shaw, as he answers: 'Everything!'

Beside this dogged insistence on hope, this obstinate optimism, this holding up of the heavens even while they seem to fall, all else about Bernard Shaw dwindles into unimportance. His hundred and one interests might be mentioned, but all belong more properly to the ephemeral and incidental part of a man's life, and with that we are not especially concerned. Thus mention might be made of Bernard Shaw's love of swimming; or his interest in boxing; or his leaning towards the mystical philosophy of strength culture professed by the ex-champion wrestler George Hackenschmidt; or how, being in a sufficiency of funds, he declined the money, a sum of £8,000 odd, when awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature (Nobel, by the way, was the inventor of dynamite); or how at one time certain tradesmen used to make more money by selling the neat spidery signature on Shaw's weekly cheques than by cashing them in the ordinary way, and how Shaw could stop the practice only by paying for his vegetables and groceries in cash; or how the Royalist Society of the U.S.A. once voted him

King of America and Will Rogers Vice-King. But our knowledge of the essential man is not thereby much increased. Indeed some of the Shavian trimmings tend definitely to obscure the real Bernard Shaw. Joey the Clown, for example, frequently usurps his master's voice, though I suppose it is hardly correct to call Joey a trimming, since Shaw inherited him from his father and took delight in bringing him to fullness.

These considerations notwithstanding, there are one or two matters worth mentioning, in the hope that they may help to bring to life a portrait so accurate that it may be dull, and touch it up with detail without blurring its main features.

One is the matter of Shaw's manners. Without question, but contrary to general opinion, these are good. I have no doubt, for instance, that nothing but innate good manners prevented the youthful Shaw from disentangling himself from the prostitute, aforementioned, until they were half way up Bond Street. This does not mean, however, that Shaw is never rude. It means that when he is rude he is deliberately so, with the result that his rudeness means and is intended to mean something. Only a well-mannered person can be rude with effect, and being rude is one of Shaw's ways of teaching. Thus he refused to attend Sir Henry Irving's funeral at Westminster 'on the grounds that Literature has no place at Irving's graveside.' In the same way he declined to contribute or take part in Dame Marie Tempest's Jubilee, doubtless on the ground that she had been singing away merrily in light opera when she ought to have been busy fitting herself to play heroines first in Ibsen and then in Shaw.

Even when he is rude, or perhaps particularly then, Shaw takes care to be witty. But sometimes his shafts are less sharpened than usual, or aimed at people who are not amused and who yet have wit enough themselves to pay him back in his own coin. Thus when Winston Churchill's mother, Lady Randolph Churchill, exercising her functions as a great Edwardian hostess, asked the remarkable dramatic critic with the red beard to her house-party for the week-end, the remarkable dramatic critic replied to the invitation:

'Why this assault on my well-known principles about week-ends?' This communication being made on a post card, Lady Randolph seized a telegraph form and scribbled on it: 'I know nothing of your principles but hope they are better than your manners.' This incident is interesting chiefly as marking one of the few occasions on which Shaw failed to score a bull's-eye; or indeed to score at all, for his effort reads like that of a tyro trying to make an impression. To which the answer is, of course, that he made an impression.

Besides being natural, Shaw's manners are cultivated, for his constitutional timidity compelled him to cultivate the whole of that side of his nature which he had to present to his fellow beings in the course of social contact. The result is a consciousness which lends his good manners an agreeable bouquet or flavour which the good manners of people more confident by nature somehow lack.

The necessity for good manners is not infrequently stressed by Bernard Shaw in his plays. How comforting, for instance, it would be if husbands in real life could deal with those importunate women who want to rid them of their wives, as good-manneredly as King Magnus in *The Apple Cart* puts Orinthia in her place when that lady begs him to shoot or drown or divorce Jemima his queen. No fur flies, there is no 'scene' as he gently casts over his mistress the following spell of Shavian wisdom and music. 'Do not let us fall into the common mistake of expecting to become one flesh and one spirit. Every star has its own orbit; and between it and its nearest neighbour there is not only a powerful attraction but an infinite distance. When the attraction becomes stronger than the distance the two do not embrace; they crash together in ruin. We two also have our orbits, and must keep an infinite distance between us to avoid a disastrous collision. Keeping our distance is the whole secret of good manners: and without good manners human society is intolerable and impossible.' On another occasion the same monarch interrupts at once when a member of his Cabinet accuses him of jesting. 'I am not jesting, Mr. Nicobar. But I am certainly trying to discuss our differences in a good-humoured manner. Do you want me to lose my temper and make scenes?'

Good temper is another striking quality of Bernard Shaw's. Probably no one has fought more fights than he and lost his temper so seldom. Always he gives the impression of being furious with the fault and on the friendliest and most sympathetic terms with the offender. As J. B. Priestley well says: 'The blows rain down on us, but we never bleed. Somewhere behind the abrupt attack is a smiling magnanimity, just as behind the hammering and slashing style there is a voice that is enchanting in private talk and irresistible on the platform.' Rumpuses are such a waste of energy and time; except, of course, on paper, when a furious onslaught may do a great amount of good, and produce a conversion and incidentally fine prose. But such an onslaught will always be about some idea rather than about anything personal. As regards Shaw's own feelings, they are expressed when he makes Julius Caesar cry out: 'Resent! Oh thou foolish Egyptian, what have I to do with resentment?'

Good temper is the outcome of one of two causes: serenity of outlook, or innate laziness that cannot be bothered to lose its temper; and Shaw, or G. B. S., as he is often called in a commingling of affection and respect, is not lazy. His serenity, on the other hand, radiates from him in a kind of mental glow, warming and lighting his every activity. Because of it, he acts on those he meets like a spiritual needle-bath with a thousand jets, or like the sunshine he is always advocating. Even meeting him on the talkies is a tonic. In advertisements we see pictures of people who are paid to say that they are serene and bursting with life because they have eaten a certain food or drunk a certain drink; this kind of serenity, however, induced from without by calories or vitamins, is not Shaw's kind. His is from within, and is the cause rather than the result of his surprising health. His vegetarian diet never produced his serenity: the serenity was already there, and persuaded him to the vegetarian diet. Derived in this way, inwardly, this quality never wears out and serves its owner in all manner of ways, enabling him to remain imperturbable master of all situations, unruffled and unembarrassed. For example, as he stood on the stage before an enthusiastically applauding

house to make his speech at the first night of *Arms and the Man*, an heroic youth in the gallery waited for the silence and then broke it with a piercing hiss. In a flash and not discomfited at all, Shaw fixed the interrupter with a broad smile and shouted back: 'Sir, I quite agree with you; but what can we two do against a whole houseful of the opposite opinion?'

It is with this good-tempered serenity that he pays his compliments. He wanted a certain actress to play the part of Candida in a new production, she having played it so beautifully in a previous one. She wrote saying that she was sorry, but meanwhile she had married and did not like to leave her small boy; whereupon Shaw, unlike so many managers or authors, who would have implied that there were just as good fish in the sea, wrote back on a post card (he always favoured post cards): 'Damn you, madam, you have ruined my play: I hope your son grows up to be an actor.'

Similarly, he can comfort and inspire. Meeting an actress who had only a walking-on part in *Saint Joan*, he cheered her up by twinkling at her: 'They also serve who only stand and wait.'

Conversely Bernard Shaw is an adept at rapping people over the knuckles if he thinks they deserve it. There is the story of the beautiful lady (often erroneously identified with the late Isadora Duncan) who wrote to Shaw from Zürich pointing out that he had the finest brain in the world and she the finest body, and proposing, of the sake of posterity, that they should unite to produce a wonder-child inheriting her beauty and his brains. This was too much for the author of *Man and Superman* and creator of Ann Whitefield, and Shaw replied, on a post card as usual: 'Ah; but suppose it were to inherit my beauty and your brains!'

Not being in the habit of reading post cards unless they are addressed to me, and not having been born when *Arms and the Man* had its first night, I have no ready means of verifying these stories. But even if they never happened at all, Shaw must learn to suffer legends to grow around him, as he suffers so many things, serenely.

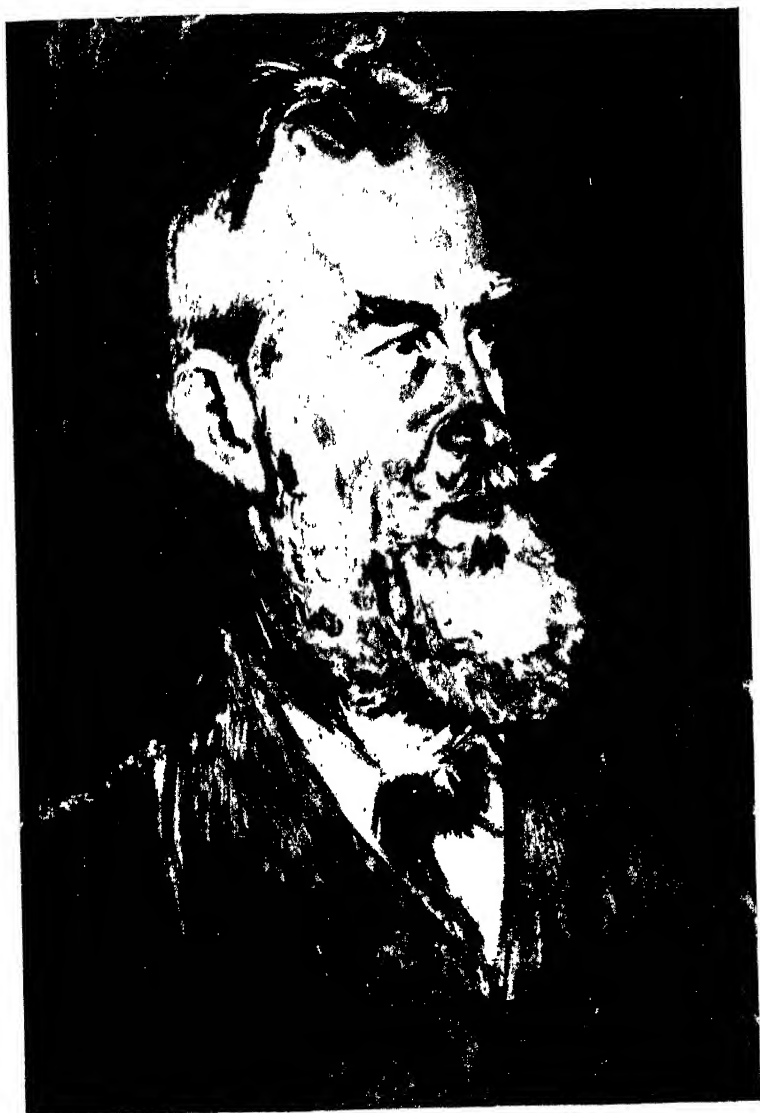
THE MAN—



'Just as I am, without one plea'

*Bronze bust by Auguste Rodin in the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art,
London*

—AND THE REPUTATION



‘G. B. S.’

from Augustus John's portrait in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Nations he chastizes as readily as individuals, and the greater the nation the more he tries to shock and shake it out of its complacency. England, of course, is used to him, and has reached the stage of saying: 'It's only Bernard Shaw.' America, on the other hand, was long sensitive to the Shavian sting, and when The Apple Cart's Power-mistress General declared that Americans were 'only Wops pretending to be Pilgrim Fathers,' Americans, on the whole, were not amused. Yet this was less disparaging than Shaw's much earlier description of the United States as a Nation of Villagers, capable of producing heroic sub-post-mistresses and blacksmiths, but unconscious of anything ten miles away, or than his later definition of the hundred-per-cent American as ninety-nine per cent idiot. Worst of all, perhaps, for those in glass houses who like to throw stones, is Shaw's explanation that such descriptions apply to every nation on earth, but that the American is conceited enough to think that he is the only fool in the world, and takes them as personal insults accordingly, though Sinclair Lewis, with his Babbitts and Gantrys, won the Nobel Prize by being harder on his countrymen than fifty Bernard Shaws.

The truth is, Shaw likes fighting successful people, successful nations, successful institutions; attacking them; rousing them; trying their mettle; and, as he puts it, 'knocking down their sand castles so as to make them build stone ones.' We must not expect Shaw to be insincerely polite or merely 'nice,' for no one with any force in him is ever altogether 'nice.' In short, the only thing to do with Shaw, since we refuse to take him seriously, is to grin and bear him.

It is not difficult to tolerate him if we look on him as a sort of institution, and regard his chastisements as so many bulletins issued at irregular intervals from a Ministry of Moral Health. These we can then bear, when similar chastisements by upstarts would be intolerable. That Shaw is now such an institution is evidenced by the remarkable fact that, alone of all men living, his fame belongs not only to the twentieth century but to the nineteenth as well, and that he made his mark in two worlds, the pre-War and

the post-War. Those two hurdles, the turn of the century and the thirty-year World War, he took in his stride like some Colossus, while smaller men jibbed and fell at one or the other. For half a century and more Shaw has kept going, his vigour unabated, his course undeflected, and his star undimmed. Thus, by sheer persistence and length of service, he has established a sort of right of way across the wide domain of public feelings, and we no longer grudge him admittance to his well-worn path, trample on what he may. We have granted him a tormentor's licence as well as a jester's, because as an institution he is well established, and can therefore do no harm. He is twenty years older than the Albert Memorial.

Taking us behind the scenes of this one-man show called Bernard Shaw, our public castigator confesses that he is 'only a brute nor'-nor'-west,' with the result that people who meet him are surprised to find a sympathetic, affable, courteous fellow who obviously would not hurt a fly, in place of the vitriolic fire-snorting ogre his writings had led them to expect.

One criticism remains to be disposed of. It is a major one, not because it is valid but because it is common. Representative of it is the puerile complaint that Bernard Shaw is 'only a talker' or 'only a writer,' and not a man of action. As though good talk or fine writing grew on every bush! Such so-called critics should complain because the rose does not bear figs, or because the blackbird cannot roar like a lion. Shaw does not pretend to be a man of action, any more than he pretends to be a sword-swallower, but is, in his own words, 'a sedentary literary civilian, constitutionally timid.' No doubt it is easy to say that Shaw is all gas and gaiters, and that while he has been writing, others have been doing. For instance, it could be said that while Shaw was writing on prison reform, first Winston Churchill and then Sir Samuel Hoare were tackling and effecting it; or that while Shaw tried to break down the obscurantism concerning prostitution and venereal disease by writing Mrs. Warren's Profession and urging a hearing for Brieux's plays, it was broken down not by him but, thanks largely to the First World War, by Marie Stopes in

England and Margaret Sanger in America; or that more was done to rectify the iniquities of the English marriage contract by A. P. Herbert (as he then was) after only two years in Parliament, than by Bernard Shaw in fifty years of reasoned invective on the subject. But such an attitude leaves out of consideration altogether the power of the pen, with its dissemination of thought, its subtle influence, and its slow working. No one can gauge how much or how little Shaw's steady torrent of propaganda helped to change public opinion, slowly and insidiously, and so pave the way for such reforms, quarter-way and slight though they be.

He who can, does: he who cannot, teaches. So runs one of the Shavian aphorisms, with some disparagement to the teacher. Yet teachers are among the most important and powerful people in the world, because what the man of action does depends on what he has been taught. Stalin, for instance, is a man of action, but all his actions derive from the thoughts he imbibed when, as a novice for the priesthood, he first read Karl Marx during forbidden hours in his dormitory. Swords can destroy everything except the thoughts and ideas propagated by the pen, and in wielding the pen Shaw wields the mightier weapon. In any case he had no choice, physiologically speaking; for phrenologists point to the bulge at the back of the head as the source or bump of 'action,' and Shaw's head, when seen in profile, though magnificently domed all round, reminds one of nothing so much as a croquet hoop.

Admittedly we should owe an additional debt to Shaw as a social reformer, if he possessed the specific talents for getting things done which characterized a man like Plimsoll. Like Shaw, Plimsoll was a freelance with no official post nor any connection with the Government or anything else. Yet, by sheer dint of pestering and lobbying year in and year out, he managed to effect what he wanted, which was to make the sea safer for sailors, and his fame rests secure for ever in the Plimsoll line painted on every mercantile vessel that goes to sea. But Bernard Shaw, unlike Plimsoll, is a man of many parts, and our quarrel with him as a man of inaction is really a quarrel with him because he is not wholly a social reformer. He is such a good one, on paper,

that we want him to go further. Sometimes he does, and is moved to downright Plimsollic action by, as we should expect, the spectacle of cruelty. In 1925, for instance, he was motoring in the Isle of Wight and passed some prisoners from Parkhurst Prison. Shaw noticed that they were wearing chains, and found that they also ate and slept in them. His feelings may be imagined. He took the matter up at once, with the result that that particular piece of barbarity was discontinued.

Normally, however, Shaw is content to stay at his desk, the centre of his outspreading web. As the cobbler is at home with his last, and Diogenes at his best in his tub, so Shaw is wise to keep hold of his pen. For he is in a most enviable position. He is the Leader of an Opposition who knows that he will never be called on to assume office, and is therefore free to say what he likes. He will never have to translate his words into actions, or deal responsibly and practically to-morrow with the things he criticizes so irresponsibly and theoretically to-day. He can let himself go as trenchantly as he pleases. Happy man, to have the gift of words, and never be forced to eat them!

There can be no more history about a happy life than there are plays about happy marriages, and the well-ordered tranquillity and domesticity of Bernard Shaw's married life, aided, shielded, and understood by his wife, are such as to test the powers of biographers.

In this biographical portrait mention of sex has been deliberately reduced to a minimum. Not that there were no women in Shaw's life: there were, probably more than in most men's. In his thirties, certainly, his amorous adventures were vigorous enough to elicit Sidney Webb's 'My! You do warm both hands at the fire of life!' although later, looking back on his past, Shaw informed Frank Harris: 'You may count the women who have left me nothing to desire on less than the fingers of one hand.' Well wide of the mark was H. G. Wells, therefore, in describing Shaw as 'an intellectual eunuch' and dismissing him as 'a sexless biped.'

Women there were right enough, but—and this is the point—they left no mark, never wholly entangled Shaw.

No woman could completely conquer him because he was never able to sustain the feeling—illusion, he would call it—that he belonged to any woman ‘body and soul,’ or that any woman could by any stretch of his heart-strings ever be ‘all the world’ to him. To one who regarded the world as an immediate object for his unremitting attention, a world lost for love would be a world anything but well lost. That ubiquitous huntress, Woman, never netted the sprite in Shaw; and when she appealed to his lower centres, consciously or not, she would soon find the real Shaw escaping to the intellectual perch of his higher centres, and looking down at her with an amused, detached, and tolerant grin—behaviour holding no woman’s sexual interest for long.

It is perhaps significant that Shaw’s character George Fox, asked what he knows about women, replies: ‘Only what the woman in myself teaches me.’ Such an answer reveals the real Bernard Shaw. Significant, too, was his love affair with Ellen Terry. It was his longest and least unsatisfactory love affair; successful, not despite the fact that the pair never met until it was all over, but because of it, and because it was conducted at a distance, all on paper, without the intrusion—Shaw would say the hindrance—of the flesh. Indeed, a sexual diagnosis of Shaw might fairly read: ‘Continent until the age of twenty-nine. Nothing unnatural or abnormal, however. Merely subnormal. Uninterested. Detached.’

In other aspects, too, there clings about Shaw the aloofness and detachment of the sojourner. He has none of the airs or interests of the man of property, for to him all property is theft. It was not Shaw but Mrs. Shaw who saw to it that they lived in comfort and comparative luxury. It was all one to Shaw, and if the expensive oriental rugs, say, which to the tune of some thousands of pounds largely carpeted their handsome Whitehall flat had been suddenly replaced with rushes or linoleum, Shaw would have been the last person to notice or mind. In *things*, as such, he was never greatly interested, whatever their market value. How unattached he was to his surroundings, and how his wife realized this, may be gathered from the following disturbance of his daily siesta. In London Shaw had long

been used to take an afternoon nap in the drawing-room, where one of the well-upholstered ends of a comfortable Chesterfield sofa served his head for a pillow. One day, quite regardless of her husband's habit, Mrs. Shaw got rid of this sofa and replaced it with a more elegant and costlier piece whose hard wooden end none could mistake for a pillow after lunch or at any other time. Most husbands would have grumbled at being so summarily deprived of an accessory to their rest. Not so Shaw: expelled from the drawing-room, he thenceforth took his nap in the least uncomfortable chair in his sitting-room, forbearing to complain because, in his eyes, there was nothing to complain about. His kingdom is of the intellect, his riches immaterial, and his most valued possessions the treasures of his mind, ideas.

Those ideas, as we have seen, are not peculiarly his own: he found them. They are common property, and he would pass them to us as eagerly as he received them from others. Teacher rather than discoverer, cartographer rather than explorer, interpreter rather than creator, he has founded no new religion, formulated no new philosophy, discovered no new truth of science, economics, politics, or art. Even his plays are constructed avowedly on classical lines, and intentionally packed with stage tricks hundreds of years old. His conduct, too rather than original, has been exemplarily orthodox, a pattern of middle-class virtues.

But if Shaw is not original, he is none the less unique. No one can make such glitteringly effective use of the philosophies and discoveries of others. He takes their unpromising material, distils and simplifies it, then dresses it in parable and decorates it with homely simile until it is completely humanized without ever being dull, with the result that as an elucidator he is unrivalled. On almost every subject G. B. S. acts with gay competence as guide to the laity, initiating its members into the mazes of the experts and making their intricacies plain. By the alchemy of genius he transmutes the abstruse theories and academic jargon of the specialist into forms easily digestible by the willing but none too clever layman. He acts as a powerful digestive, and is, as it were, an enzyme of the intellect.

His humorous juices enable Tom, Dick, and Harry to feed on problems they would otherwise avoid as indigestible. No matter how big and tough the problem; or whether it be religious, like evolution; or political, like democracy; or scientific, like the precession of the equinoxes and the perihelion of Mercury, let the Shavian juices act on it, and at once it becomes not only assimilable but palatable, with the feeders, like *Oliver Twists*, asking for more.

It is significant that as Bernard Shaw became established and therefore increasingly able to write to please himself, he drew increased attention to his essential role of interpreter, until finally he imprinted it on the title-pages of some of his later plays. There he belittles Shaw the mere playwright to emphasize Shaw the preacher and teacher. Thus *Too True to be Good* is described not as a play at all but 'A Collection of Stage Sermons'; whilst the word *Lesson*, an apt description of the Shavian drama as a whole, makes its long overdue appearance in *In Good King Charles's Golden Days*, the subtitle of which reads: 'A History Lesson by a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.'

When this Fellow teaches history or anything else, his lessons are without tears, but they bear fruit because he brings to life all he touches. It is the touch of genius. How rare it is! Many teachers have the necessary equipment of knowledge: how many can pass that knowledge on? Shaw, however, in addition to an equipment above and wider than most, possesses the born teacher's special gifts of painstaking lucidity, patience, and infectious enthusiasm. In short, much of the real Shaw is Shaw the expert teacher. And to teach well he has kept his mind as an athlete keeps his body, trained, fit, exercised, and fresh. As for the body, it is a part of that irksome matter that must be mastered by spirit, and as such Shaw has treated his, abstemiously and with discipline, fastidiously but without fuss. Still, it is the only body he has got: better therefore, he thinks, keep it bright and clean.

This rich Bolshevik, this comfortable Spartan, this healthy-minded Puritan, this ascetic who yet insists that he is a voluptuary and that all the conventional self-indulgences are self-tortures, this Bernard Shaw who takes

neither drugs nor drink, who chews no gum and smokes no tobacco, yet confesses to one stimulant: he goes to church. Our eyebrows will lower themselves again when it is added that Shaw's church is any church so long as it is empty. He has been heard to remark in that laughingly matter-of-fact tone he always instinctively adopts to hide his innermost feelings, that an empty cathedral is the one place he can go into and be at peace. There, one with God and with the beggar at the door alike, he can forget that he ever heard the name Bernard Shaw. Released for a moment from its thralldom, he can dip into the well of his being that has no name, and draw upon its waters. Whatever their depth, they are at least still. No bubble of wit breaks their quiet surface. And there for a while the weary actor can rest from his part in the human drama, take off both the comic and the tragic mask, and reach the other side of good and evil.

But let us beware. Blake said: 'Excess of sorrow laughs. Excess of joy weeps.' In church Shaw does neither. It infuriates him to be sentimentalized as a tragic figure behind the scenes or when the audience is not looking. Truly his father's son, his sense of the ludicrous can always be relied on to put in an appearance in life, as in his plays, to save or smash any situation. We remember the story of Grimaldi. A certain man went to see a doctor to be cured of depression. The doctor, finding that he was suffering from acute melancholia, recommended him to go to the circus and see Grimaldi. The man smiled and said: 'I am Grimaldi.' Shaw, on the other hand, with Joey's help, cures himself, and at his sickest delivers his doctors from the blues.

Let us leave him, then, alone in his empty church with 'broken bits of laughter stuck about his heart,' and go our way.

But the church is not empty after all. In the dim stained light there is another figure; someone with the face of a young saint, yet with white hair, who stands as though in a trance, gazing. Who can it be? He looks like a madman. Or a genius, perhaps. And what is a genius? Shaw overhears us. Always anxious to answer questions, he runs nimbly up into the pulpit, enjoying himself as though he were back in Hyde Park and as though every

pew were filled, and there, with perfect articulation and the most beautiful Irish accent, he proclaims: 'A genius is a person who, seeing farther and probing deeper than other people, has a different set of ethical valuations from theirs, and has energy enough to give effect to this extra vision and its valuations in whatever manner best suits his or her specific talents.' Noting how closely the cap fits him, we thank Shaw for being so lucid, and walk down the nave towards the stranger.

It is only Peter Keegan, a poor madman who will harm nobody. Shaw will not mind his being there. Madman, yes; but genius, no; for though Peter's ethical valuations are different from other people's, he has never in this world been able to give effect to them. Like vulgar sightseers, we prod him with a question: what is he thinking of, we ask. He answers that he is dreaming of heaven. Pressing our curiosity, for we do not meet Keegans every day, and with our mind's eyes suddenly filled, as likely as not, with Tom Broadbent's picture of heaven as 'a sort of pale blue satin place, with all the pious old ladies of the congregation sitting as if they were at a service, and some awful person in a study at the other end of the hall,' we ask Father Keegan what his picture of heaven is like. The unfrocked priest replies: 'In my dreams it is a country where the State is the Church and the Church the people: three in one and one in three. It is a commonwealth in which work is play and play is life: three in one and one in three. It is a temple in which the priest is the worshipper and the worshipper the worshipped: three in one and one in three. It is a godhead in which all life is human and all humanity divine: three in one and one in three. It is, in short, the dream of a madman.'

Bernard Shaw has come down from the pulpit, and before retiring to his meditations is hanging around clearly waiting to be called a genius to his face. If we call him a madman as well, I do not think he will mind: he will be in such good company.

And there this book would end, as *The Real Bernard Shaw* ended before it, did not a certain Shavian memory hauntingly persist, pleading to be recorded.

It is one of my last memories of Shaw at Ayot St. Lawrence, when he was many months on the venerable side of ninety, and in repose not unlike the figure of some Tibetan lama carved from ivory. Yet his complexion was not so much ivory as like a miller's, pink and white and finely floured with the years. His eyes still held their twinkle; and when he was animated—almost all the while—the benign lama quickly gave place to someone suspiciously like Joey the Clown. His great age was apparent chiefly in the vividness of his youthful recollections as he took us, an audience of two, without effort back to the days when, a shy and shabby stripling, he looked down from a Dublin theatre gallery to watch the great Barry Sullivan act Macbeth.

Only Sullivan, Shaw explained, had enough physical and vocal power to play the end of Macbeth—after, that is, the news that Birnam Wood was come to Dunsinane—in a single unbroken tremendous crescendo. Other actors, he warned, lacking Sullivan's unique power, must periodically return to earth, as it were, rest on this line and on that, and start again *piano*, or they would either rant ineffectually or burst their lungs. In short, they must tackle the scene not as one crescendo, but as a series, and not attempt to climb it in a single sweep. Then, word-perfect, he showed us. It was an astonishing feat. Watching and listening, I passed into a fantastic day-dream. There, before me, or so it seemed, sat none other than King Lear, strangely sane and playful, turning himself unaccountably into Macbeth, and finally borrowing Gabriel's trumpet to announce to the world the perfect epitaph for Bernard Shaw. For the last sonorous words I heard reverberating through that small sitting-room warmed by an autumn sun were these, Dublin-accented:

‘Blow, wind! Come, wrack!
At least we ’ll die with harness on our back.’

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